

AIKEN'S GREAT JOE PHENIX STORY!

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THE MAN OF THREE OR KATE SCOTT THE POLICE SPY

"I HAVE GOT ON THE TRACK OF A YOUNG GIRL WHO HAS JUST INHERITED A FORTUNE OF ABOUT FIVE MILLION DOLLARS!"

The Man of Three;

OR,
KATE SCOTT, THE POLICE SPY.

BY ALBERT W. AIKEN,
AUTHOR OF "JOE PHENIX, THE POLICE SPY,"
"THE WOLVES OF NEW YORK," "THE
BAT OF THE BATTERY," "THE
ORANGE GIRL," ETC.

CHAPTER I.

A LONELY ROAD AND WHAT TRANSPRIRED THERE-IN.

THE night was dark, although there was a full moon, for across the sky sailed a mass of clouds, dense enough to obscure the sky-lamp's rays.

The hour was late—close to the witching time of midnight, when "churchyards yawn," and graves give up their dead.

A handsome coupé, drawn by a mettlesome horse, was rolling rapidly along the road which lead from Morrisania to Westchester—two villages adjacent to the metropolis, New York.

The carriage, having crossed the Bronx River, had entered upon a particularly lonely part of the road—lonely even in broad daylight, but ten times more so at such an hour as that at which our tale begins.

The houses are few and far between, the road is a bad one; but, regardless of this fact, the carriage was rattling along at a good speed, the spirited horse needing no urging.

Within the carriage was a precious freight, two young and beautiful girls, richly dressed.

Both seemed alarmed at the apparently reckless speed of the horse, for the vehicle so swayed and jolted that even a firm-nerved man might well have been nervous and excited.

Firm friends were the two, although one was heiress to a fortune estimated at five millions, while the other was without expectations.

The first was a pronounced brunette, a tall, queenly, Cleopatra-like girl, with hair black as the raven's wing, and large, lustrous, ebon-hued eyes—a woman fitted to shine as a queen in any society. This was Virginia Auchinclose, the only living relative of the great Campbell Auchinclose, who had lately retired from business with the fortune we have named.

Her companion was her school chum, a little, jolly blonde, decidedly pretty, and as full of fun as a sunny day is full of lights and shadows.

She was Pauline Birdseye, and was the daughter of a widowed mother who resided in the West.

Although usually frank and open-hearted, Pauline was never particularly communicative in regard to her mother, so it was surmised that, not having wealth at her command, she was reticent on her family affairs—surrounded as she was by companions, all of whom came from homes of wealth and aristocracy.

Both the girls had been inmates of one of the most fashionable boarding-schools for young ladies in the country, on the Hudson River, only a few miles from the metropolis.

Miss Auchinclose had for some years enjoyed the advantages offered by this institution, but her companion was comparatively a newcomer.

From the first meeting the two girls had taken a wonderful fancy to each other, and soon became the warmest of friends.

The end of the school term had come: Miss Auchinclose had graduated with honors, and now was on her way home, accompanied by her friend, whom she had invited to spend the summer with her.

The retired merchant was Virginia's uncle, and he being his only relative, as we have said, it was understood that, at his death, she would inherit the greater part of his fortune;—in fact, he himself had stated as much, and, in consequence, had her promise not to receive any gentleman's attentions without his knowledge and assent—which promise he had exacted, as he explained, to prevent her from becoming the prey of fortune-hunters or adventurers.

And, as Virginia confided to her friend, the lively Miss Birdseye, it did not trouble her in the least to keep this promise, for, although romantic and impressionable by nature, yet she had never encountered any gentleman in whom she took the slightest interest.

"My goodness!" exclaimed Miss Birdseye, "the carriage will be overturned if the man drives on in this reckless way!"

"I am really afraid it will be," responded her companion, in evident trepidation. "I will speak to him to drive more carefully," but, before Miss Auchinclose could do so, the carriage came in violent contact with a large stone; a sudden, sharp noise, as though some of the harness had given way, instantly followed, and the coupé came to an immediate halt.

The driver rather clumsily dismounted, busied himself for a few moments in examining the harness, and then came to the door of the carriage.

The man was a short, thick-set fellow, with red hair and a full red beard. He was dressed in a

dark-gray livery, a genteel-looking coachman, but his unsteady gait and the strong smell of liquor convinced the two girls that he had been over-drinking.

"The harness has been after breaking, miss," the man announced, with a strong Irish accent, his voice thick and husky. "There's a house beyant, an' I'll just go for a bit of a strap, and thin, mebbe, yeas kin go on," and without giving the ladies a chance to express their wishes the tipsy coachman marched off.

"Isn't this dreadful?" Miss Birdseye exclaimed, "to go away and leave us alone in this horrid place? As far as I can see, there isn't a house in sight."

"Oh, I do not think there is any danger, for the road seems wholly deserted," concluded Miss Virginia.

"You can't tell about such things," declared the other. "Evil-minded men might be lurking in just such a place as this."

"Well, we must make the best of it, for we can't help ourselves," Miss Auchinclose consolingly remarked.

"It certainly has been an unfortunate trip, and if some footpad was to come along now and relieve us of our jewelry it would be a fitting wind-up to the journey."

The girl's speech was not without good reason, for here it was nearly midnight and they had not yet reached their destination—the Auchinclose mansion, which, under the title of Pine Tree Hall, was one of the "show places" of the neighborhood.

It was situated on Throg's Point, a little to the westward of the Point itself, and the mansion, a massive stone pile, looking like one of the old-time castles, surrounded by lofty pines, commanded a magnificent view of the water—the junction of Long Island Sound and the arm of the sea, which is locally and incorrectly called the East River.

The train which bore the ladies to New York was due in the metropolis at eight o'clock; but, owing to an accident on the road, it was an hour late and did not make its appearance in the Grand Central Depôt until a few minutes after nine in the evening.

Mr. Auchinclose's close coupé carriage was in waiting, and, despite the bustle and confusion around the depôt, Miss Virginia recognized the red-bearded driver the moment she came out of the building.

The girls hurried into the carriage, delighted to escape from the confusion, and the coachman, clambering to his seat, immediately drove off.

The vehicle went on rapidly until the bridge was crossed, but a little while afterward the driver pulled up suddenly and announced that the "baste" had lost a shoe and it would be necessary for him to have the shoe replaced before they could go on.

There was a smithy right in the neighborhood, he said, and it would not take long to have the job done; so off he started with the horse. To the annoyance of the ladies it was over an hour before he came back.

The horse-shoer had closed his shop, he explained, and he had to wait for him.

And now had come this third mishap.

It was not strange that Miss Birdseye should think the trip had been a remarkable one.

CHAPTER II.

AN UNKNOWN HERO.

THOUGH Miss Birdseye had spoken half-jestingly of footpads, both herself and Miss Auchinclose looked restlessly around them, peering into the darkness as though they expected to behold unwelcome visitors—so nervous had they become over the situation.

"This is perfectly dreadful!" exclaimed Pauline in a half-whisper.

"Yes, it is; would to Heaven the coachman would return!"

"I haven't much to lose, if a robber should put in an appearance, Virgie, but your jewelry is valuable."

"Yes, my diamonds are in my sachel, three thousand dollars' worth at least."

"And your pocketbook, too, is well filled."

"Yes, with more than I usually carry," Miss Auchinclose admitted, growing momentarily more uneasy. "Uncle sent me five hundred dollars for my graduating expenses, and I only used about a hundred."

"Ah, if anybody had sent me five hundred dollars I would be sure to find some way of getting rid of it," the lively Pauline assured.

"Hark! I think I hear footsteps!" Virginia exclaimed, abruptly.

"Oh, I hope it is the coachman!"

"I fear it is not; there seems to be more than one person coming."

"He may have procured assistance."

"No, no, it is strangers, I think," the other replied, cautiously, and in a tone full of anxiety.

Miss Auchinclose was right; the new-comers were strangers, and a rough-looking pair they appeared to be, as they approached the carriage, the girls shrinking into the interior as the two came up.

"Blow me tight, Bill, if here ain't a precious lay!" cried the first man, a tall, bony fellow, extremely seedy in his dress.

In fact, all that could be seen of his attire was a long-skirted, old-fashioned coat, which covered him almost from head to heel, and a slouch hat, worn and battered out of all shape.

The second man was a fit companion for the first, only he was short and stout, his coat was not so long and his hat not quite so bad.

The two men came close to the carriage and peered into it, to the manifest alarm of both occupants, although they did their best not to betray their fear.

"Blow me tight if there ain't a couple of dames into the cart!" the big fellow exclaimed. "Well, here's a piece of luck! Why, ladies, the sight of yer pretty faces is as welcome as the flowers in May. My pal here, and me, was just a-wondering where we would be able to raise a few coppers to get a bed for the night, an' we had just about concluded there wouldn't be any use for a bed, seeing that the blessed morning wasn't far away," and the vagabond leered into the carriage in an insolent way.

A ray of hope sprung up in Pauline's mind. Perhaps if they gave the man money he would go away?

Acting on this idea, Miss Birdseye took out her purse.

"Oh, certainly, we will be glad to help you along," she said, endeavoring to appear calm and unconcerned.

"How much money do you require?"

"Bless yer pretty face!" the tramp cried, with elaborate politeness, "I don't want to put you to the trouble of countin' the rhino, so give me the hull on it!" and before the girl could anticipate and prevent the action, he leaned in at the window and grabbed the purse—at which act both young ladies screamed—thus betraying their fright and helplessness.

The tramp immediately whipped out a long and glittering knife, and brandishing it, cried:

"See here! you don't want to do that again, or I will be compelled to slice you with this here. I ain't got no time to fool, and I just want you to hand out all yer valuables as quick as you kin! Hand 'em out or I'll carve you inter a pork pie!"

And again the tramp brandished the ugly blade.

Terror-stricken, the girls hastened to comply, but before they could do so a new-comer appeared upon the scene.

A well-built, finely-dressed young fellow, with a dark, handsome, foreign-looking face, who carried with him, after the fashion of pedestrians, a stout cane.

He had approached unperceived, taking care to keep on the opposite side of the way, so as to have the carriage between himself and the tramps until he got close at hand; then he sprung from behind the vehicle and brought his cane down with terrific force on the arm which clutched the knife. The fellow dropped the steel with a howl of pain.

Then again the quickly-handled cane struck the hand which held Miss Birdseye's dainty pocketbook, and this the ruffian dropped as though the article had suddenly become red-hot.

That was enough for the brigands. In terror and fear they took to their heels and fled in the direction of the city.

The young man laughed heartily as he beheld this flight of the rogues, but he did not attempt to pursue them.

Picking up the pocketbook he handed it in through the carriage window.

"Permit me to restore your property," he said with a polite bow. "I count it a fortunate circumstance that I happened to pass along this lonely road just at this time."

"We are ever so much obliged, sir," Miss Birdseye exclaimed.

"Yes, sir, we are deeply grateful," Virginia earnestly added, and before anything further could be said the coachman made his appearance with the horse.

"Don't mention it, I beg," the stranger answered; "I am very happy to have served you," and, catching sight of the man and the steed, he added:

"Here comes your coachman with the horse; so I presume you will be able to go on your way, and therefore I will say good-night."

And with a polite raising of his hat the gentleman departed, and almost before the ladies were aware he had disappeared in the gloom which hung like a pall over the road.

"He's gone and we never asked his name!" Miss Birdseye exclaimed at this abrupt and unexpected movement.

"Yes, how strange that we did not think of it; but, under the circumstances, perhaps it isn't so strange, for we really hadn't any opportunity. I am very sorry, though, for he did us a great service, and I should like to be able to thank him in a suitable manner."

"We may meet him again though, for it is probable that he lives in this neighborhood, and we are not far from your house, I believe," remarked Miss Pauline.

"No, not over two miles."

"He was a handsome fellow, wasn't he?"

"Yes, and very much of a gentleman, too, apparently."

It was not wonderful, considering the cir-

cumstances, that the stranger should have made a decided impression upon the two impulsive and excited ladies.

By this time the horse was again in proper harness and the carriage went on, and within a quarter of an hour the coupé halted before the massive doors of Pine-Tree Hall.

To Virginia's surprise, instead of her uncle the old family lawyer, Judge Daniel Colamore, was waiting to receive her.

The judge was a portly, gray-haired, gray-bearded gentleman of the old school—one of the leading lawyers of New York, although he seldom appeared in a court-room, but his advice was sought by many professional men, leaders in their respective legal lines, who had more confidence in the old judge's wisdom than in their own, and besides, he had a great "real-estate practice," as it is technically called. He had control of many great estates, and some of the wealthy men of the metropolis were glad to have the judge supervise their real estate matters.

A peculiar, solemn look rested upon the face of the old lawyer as he advanced to greet Virginia, and she noticed, too, that the servants regarded her in what seemed to her to be a strange manner.

After shaking hands with the judge, Miss Auchinclose introduced her friend, and then Mr. Colamore escorted the two to the reception-room, where, after they had laid aside their hats and wraps he requested them to be seated and bade them brace themselves to meet a sudden shock. It was his most melancholy duty to announce that Campbell Auchinclose was dead!

He had died suddenly and strangely—no physician being present; and when the doctor came—he and the judge arrived at the same time—after an examination, he revealed to the old lawyer the important fact that the retired merchant had died from the effects of a dose of poison, but whether Auchinclose had made a mistake in regard to the quantity or had deliberately committed suicide he could not say.

CHAPTER III.

A COMPACT.

BEHIND a desk in a small office situated on Nassau street, a few doors from Wall—New York's great money center—sat a man destined to play a prominent part in the story we are telling.

He was undersized in stature, with a head seemingly too big for his body.

His high cheek-bones, prominent nose, and tight-curling, bushy, light-hued hair indicated the Hebrew, and the sign at the vestibule entrance—

"MOSES LOENTHAL,

"Banker and Broker,"

confirmed the fact that Moses was a Jew.

Judging from the general appearance of the office and the style in which it was furnished, business was not particularly brisk with the "banker and broker."

Moses was scanning one of the morning newspapers, and a sigh escaped him as he read the announcement that the railroads, then engaged in a "cut-throat" rivalry, had determined to keep up the fight, instead of coming to an understanding and burying the hatchet.

"Der fools!" cried the broker, who spoke with a decided German accent, "to ruin de property by carrying peoples und freight for nothin'."

"Bah! I am mad mit myself for such foolishness. Dot news means anudder slump in der stock market to-day, und speculators will not operate when it looks as if de bottom mid everyt'ing vash going to drop itself out."

"Der pigeons rush in to buy ven de brice is going up, but dey buys notting ven everyt'ing is falling."

"Bah, bah, bah!" the broker ejaculated, rapidly, in disgust, "I shall makes no more monish until dis foolishness is stopped—not a dollar!"

The entrance of a stranger interrupted these meditations.

Looking up, Loenthal beheld a well-dressed, medium-sized gentleman, with a smoothly-shaven face, gray eyes, but so peculiar in their color that, at times, in certain lights, they appeared to be black, and light-brown hair, which curled in close ringlets all over his head.

The hair so nearly resembled that which adorned the Jew broker's head that, if the two heads were placed side by side, their resemblance would have been perfect—a fact which struck Loenthal at once, and then, as he looked attentively at the man, the thought came to him that he had seen him somewhere before, but when or where he could not decide.

The stranger advanced reassuringly and helped himself to a chair within reaching distance of the desk, deliberately placing his hat on it.

"How are you, Moses?" he said, familiarly. "You do not remember me, eh?"

The Jew's amazement increased. The voice seemed familiar, yet he could not place him or name him.

"No, but I t'ink somewhere before I have met mit you," Moses replied.

"Quite right there. We did some business together across the water."

"So I vash t'inking; but your name to me comes not, mine friend."

"Well, it was some time ago."

"Yesh?"

"Twenty years, and we were both younger then, you know."

"Yesh, there isn't any mistake about dot."

"But we have held our own pretty well, and though neither of us can boast of being a chicken, yet it would be a most excellent guess to come within a dozen years of the age of either of us."

The Jew chuckled; this was one of his weak points—a desire to appear considerably younger than he really was.

"Does your memory still retain the recollection of a certain little den in an obscure quarter of Paris, where you presided behind a counter and served your customers with bad wine and worse brandy?"

The broker looked both puzzled and annoyed.

"Oh, I see; reference to the past is not agreeable to you. You would prefer to forget all about that miserable little wine-shop, as well as your later experience in the same line in London?" and the stranger smiled sardonically.

"Well, I don't blame you, for neither your shop nor yourself bore the best of reputations. The shop had the name of being nothing more nor less than a house-of-call for thieves, and you were supposed to be hand-and-glove with some of the most noted criminals of the day."

"No, no, no such t'ing! Dat vas a slander!" the broker exclaimed, excitedly.

"Well, the police believed it was the truth, and kept such a watch upon you that, in time, your business was broken up, much to the sorrow of your clients, for among them you had the reputation of being a strictly honorable man."

"You had it in your power, many times, not only to curry favor with the authorities, but to pocket a large reward, by giving the police a hint on the sly, but, to your credit, it is said, that you never betrayed a customer, and that was the reason why you were finally driven away from Paris."

"Mine fr'end, hafe you not a mistake made?" the Hebrew inquired, with an insinuating smile.

"I am not a Frenchman."

"Of course not; you are a German Jew. I know all about that, and you are the very man. I saw you at the Fifth Avenue Hotel last night, recognized you, and when I ascertained your name, found you still kept the old appellation, disdaining to sail under false colors. Honest Moses, I am glad to meet you again, very glad, for in a little scheme which I have on hand, you can be used to a decided advantage."

"Mine fr'end, who are you?" exclaimed Loenthal, completely perplexed.

"I am your younger brother, Abraham!"

For a moment Loenthal was amazed at the audacity of the stranger, and then, recovering himself, he shook his head.

"Oh, no, mine fr'end, dot vas too thin!"

"That is the tale I want you to give out, though, when you go into this little scheme, and since your memory is so bad, I suppose I must try and help you to a recollection of myself."

"Twenty years ago, although not much more than a mere boy, yet I was bearded like a Cossack of the Don."

"Aha!" cried the Jew, suddenly, "I remember you now—to me it all comes back. You are Captain!"

"Hush, hush, my dear fellow!" interrupted the visitor; "don't pronounce names, you know; walls have ears sometimes, although I presume we are tolerably safe in speaking here—no danger of any one playing the eavesdropper upon us!"

"No, no; not t'e slightest."

"Well, old fellow, I am glad to meet you, as I said, for I can put you in for a good thing, if you care to join with me, and the risk you run is small."

"I am in for any goot t'ing, for I am not making any monish now; peesness is good for notting dese days."

"So I was told when I recognized you, and in a quiet way, inquired how you were doing. They said you once had quite a flourishing business, but the market took a turn in the wrong direction and smashed you up."

"Dot vas true," the broker shook his head, mournfully. "And now I pick me up a few dollars on de edge of der market."

"If you had a little capital, though, you could do something!"

Loenthal caught eagerly at the idea.

"Mine gootness! if I had der ducats I could make monish enough."

"I will find the 'soap,' and you must introduce me as your younger brother, who has just arrived in this country, and whom you have taken into partnership. I want to become familiar with this great money-center, and with some of the kings of finance who make it famous, and in time, I'll develop the plan to relieve them of a little of their surplus wealth."

"Ah, you always had a great head mit your shoulders, captain. Are you all alone?"

"Oh, no; there are three others who act with

me, two of them, I think, are old acquaintances of yours, Nailmaker and Old Monkey."

"Oh, yesh; and they are first-class."

"Yes, we all rank as good blades, and we play for high stakes. In fact, I think we have a scheme on hand now that will make even an old stager like yourself, Moses, open his eyes with wonder."

"I haf seen some big games," the Jew observed with a wise look.

"A game for a stake as big as a couple of millions—not francs, mind you, but dollars!"

"Mine gootness, no!" cried the old Jew in surprise, springing to his feet.

"Well, that is the stake we have entered for, and I think the chance for winning is good, and you shall come in for a share, if you work with us."

There was an eager sparkle in the cunning eyes:

"I am not der man to turn mine nose up ven dere ish a chance to make bi' monish."

"Pay attention then while I explain the scheme to you:

"I have got on the track of a young girl who has just inherited a fortune of about five million dollars."

"Mine gootness!"

"It makes your mouth water, eh?"

"Yesh, yesh!"

"Well, that is about the sum—more likely to be over than under, and of the amount, about two million is invested in real estate, as nearly as I can find out, and the balance is in stocks and good negotiable securities of various kinds. Now, my calculation is that two million of the three is in such a shape that, if a man could get them into his hands he would not have much difficulty in disposing of them, with the aid of a broker like yourself used to handling stocks and bonds."

"Oh, yesh; they could be worked off if mit dem too great a row vas not made."

"My idea is to manage the business so there will not be any row at all, and the proceeding is extremely simple. The girl is all alone in the world, no living relative; her only admirer an old lawyer, who, although ranking high in his profession, knows but little of criminal matters.

"Now, then, I propose to put forward a certain party who will make love to and marry the girl, and through the husband our party gets at the securities."

Loenthal looked annoyed.

"Do you call dis a simple scheme, mine fr'end?" he demanded. "Oho, I t'ink you will not find it an easy matter to fix der t'ing so your mans can marry mit a girl wort' five millions."

"Oh, I can do the trick," the other declared, confidently. "Don't you worry about that; and now, the question is, will you go into the game?" and he also arose from his chair.

"You better believe I will," asseverated the broker. "I am no fool to t'row away a goot t'ing like dot."

"All right, then, Moses. Now, remember that in the future I am your brother, Abraham, and from this time forward the firm of Moses Loenthal & Brother will move onward to prosperity."

So the compact was made.

CHAPTER IV.

A STARTLING ANNOUNCEMENT.

CAMPBELL AUCHINCLOSE being dead, the rich merchant was buried in almost regal pomp.

In regard to the manner of his taking off there was considerable doubt—whether by accident or suicide—but there was not the least uncertainty in regard to the direct means of death—morphia.

The fact was developed that the retired merchant had long been troubled with fits of wakefulness; the doctor had prescribed attenuated doses of morphine, which he had been accustomed to take regularly before retiring to rest; it was, therefore, a question whether Auchinclose had inadvertently taken an overdose, or, in a fit of disgust, had deliberately swallowed enough to put him to sleep forever.

Of course the idea of suicide was rejected by the dead man's intimate friends, and by the public at large, for it was absurd, in their opinion, that a man worth five million dollars should want to quit the world.

That a poor devil, tired of an up-hill road, and disgusted with ill-luck, might think to ease matters by taking a short-cut to the other world, was only natural, but for a man who had achieved so great a success, the idea was ridiculous.

In reality only two prominent men among all those who had been intimately acquainted with the dead merchant, were not satisfied that Auchinclose had come to his death by an unfortunate mistake, and these two were the men who had held the closest relations with the deceased—his lawyer and his doctor.

With the lawyer, Judge Colamore, the reader is already acquainted, and the doctor we will now introduce.

Roderick Roy MacGregor he was called, and in personal appearance he was as Scotch as his name—a tall, gaunt, raw-boned man, obstinate

and dogmatic, but a gentleman of decided ability, and who ranked among the most eminent doctors of the metropolis.

But, as it is always best to let such men tell their own story, we will introduce the reader to a little party seated in the library of the Auchinclose mansion, on a certain night, a week after the burial of the master of the mansion.

The hour was late, nearly eleven, before the party met, and then as much precaution was taken to prevent any one from playing the spy upon what took place, as though it was a meeting of conspirators for the purpose of hatching a plot to overturn a Government.

All the curtains were tightly drawn and the doors carefully locked.

Present at the conference were the doctor, the lawyer, and a third gentleman, a muscular-appearing man of powerful stature, with a smoothly-shaven face, whereon sat a quiet and rather stern expression.

This man had a lion-like head, and a good judge of human nature would have picked him out from a crowd as one born to command.

He had been introduced into the mansion in the most secret manner by the old judge—in fact, literally smuggled in, and with such care that no one in the mansion, save the two in whose company he sat, surmised that such a man was within the walls of Pine Tree Hall.

The old lawyer had reason for his caution, for he was about to embark on an enterprise in which the stranger was to play a prominent part, and a discovery by certain parties that his services had been called in requisition would be apt to interfere materially with the success of the lawyer's schemes.

When we give the name of this quiet-faced, but evidently iron-willed gentleman, the reader will be able to understand the mystery:—

It was Joe Phenix, the celebrated detective, the man-hunter whose reputation in this line was not exceeded by that of any sleuth-hound in America.

The detective had been conducted into the room at the time we introduce the three to the notice of our readers.

"Now, then, gentlemen, we can speak freely and without danger of our conversation being overheard," Judge Colamore remarked; "and, to begin right at the beginning, doctor, let me say to you that I have not said anything to this gentleman in regard to our suspicions," and he nodded to Phenix as he spoke.

"By the by, doctor!" he exclaimed, as a sudden thought came to him, "I presume you are not acquainted with Mr. Phenix?"

The doctor shook his head.

"Well, then, doctor, I take great pleasure in introducing you to a gentleman who, in the detective line, has won a great reputation; Doctor MacGregor, Mr. Phenix."

The gentlemen acknowledged the introduction, and then the lawyer went on:

"I told you, doctor, that I should call upon some acute detective for advice, and from what I know of Mr. Phenix I feel satisfied he will fill the bill as well as any man in the country.

"Mr. Phenix, you will understand, doctor is not attached to the metropolitan force, although some years ago he made his reputation while in the city's service; now he confines himself strictly to private business."

"I see, and so he will be able to give his full attention to this affair."

"Just so; and now that we are together we will discuss the matter in all its bearings," the judge observed.

"The doctor and myself have not had much talk about the case, for we thought best to wait for the advice of a detective," he continued. "I presume you have read the account of the death of Mr. Campbell Auchinclose?"

Joe Phenix nodded.

"Probably, too, you noted that there was a slight mystery in regard to his death?"

"That he died from an overdose of morphine, and there was a doubt as to whether the overdose was taken by accident or design."

"We wouldn't admit the latter supposition, of course," the judge announced.

"Certainly, that was only natural; the friends of a man worth five millions could not believe he would deliberately take his own life," Phenix remarked.

"There's a little touch of sarcasm in that remark, Mr. Phenix," the doctor suggested, "but, really, as far as Judge Colamore and myself are concerned it doesn't touch us. We did not believe Mr. Auchinclose had not taken his own life, because he was a rich man, or because he was our personal friend, and we did not like to have such a stigma affixed to his memory, but because, in our opinion, all the facts were against the supposition."

"Exactly!" chimed in the old lawyer; "and now, let us place the man before you as he really was—as we, his intimate acquaintances, knew him: I don't say friends, for Campbell Auchinclose was one of those peculiar men who do not have any friends. I am going to handle the man without gloves, although he is dead, but the truth must be told."

"Yes, yes, we must not mince words now," the doctor assented.

"In the first place, then, Campbell Auchinclose was thoroughly selfish in every respect—a man who thought he amounted to more than all the rest of the world besides. All through his life fortune smiled upon him. His father left him a large estate and an established business to begin with, and about all he had to do was to sit still and allow other men to make money for him."

"You see, his life had been an easy one," the doctor added, "and with the exception of this sleeplessness, for which he took the morphine, he was an extremely healthy man. I think the insomnia was caused by the fact that he had retired from business and had nothing to occupy his mind."

"Let me give you an idea of how selfish he was, and how anxious to make it appear that he was a great man," Judge Colamore resumed:

"After bringing up his niece—a Miss Virginia Auchinclose—with the assurance that she should be his sole heir, he had a will drawn out bequeathing all his fortune, with the exception of a paltry fifty thousand dollars which he left in trust for the girl, so she could only have the interest, but not touch the principal, to a dozen different institutions, all coupled with a proviso calculated to keep his name prominent as long as the institutions should last.

"Presuming on my old acquaintanceship, I remonstrated with him in regard to the injustice which I considered he was doing the girl; but, sir, I might as well have talked to a stone for all the impression I produced. He was obstinate, and so I drew the will out just as he wished. He took it with him and signed it in this very room, with two of his household as witnesses. His argument about the matter was that he had given the girl a fine education, furnished her liberally with dresses and jewelry, and the sum of money which she would receive was ample for her support, although, if it had not been for the early death of her father he would only have received half of his own father's estate, and the father gave him the whole with the understanding that when he died, the girl would be handsomely provided for."

"The man certainly acted unjustly," the detective remarked.

"Now, then, a selfish man of this kind, in full possession of all his faculties, and in a good state of health, would never rush blindly into another world."

"It certainly does not appear probable," Phenix assented. "Therefore it must have been by accident he took the overdose."

"No, sir," exclaimed Judge Colamore, firmly. "Campbell Auchinclose was too careful—too methodical a man to make any such mistake. There has been *foul play* here! Both Doctor MacGregor and myself suspect it. The will is gone—cannot be found high or low, and, to come directly to the point, we have decided that Campbell Auchinclose was *murdered!*"

CHAPTER V.

THE DETECTIVE'S PLAN.

PHENIX was surprised; he had not anticipated such a disclosure.

"Murdered?" he said, in a tone of question.

"Yes, that is the conclusion which we have come to," Judge Colamore declared, with the decision of conviction.

"The moment we learned the particulars of his death we were satisfied that there was some deep mystery attached to the case, for we could not bring ourselves to believe that he took the overdose either by accident or design, but, at the moment, the thought that there had been foul play did not occur to us. It was not until after the funeral was over and I, acting for the young lady, proceeded to examine the papers of the deceased, that my suspicion was aroused.

"Miss Virginia, of course, believed that she was her uncle's sole heir, for he had always given her to understand that she would be, and all in the household looked upon her in that light.

"I did not have the heart to undeceive her, although I knew that the will was in existence and duly signed, for only a day or two before his death, being in this apartment with him, he went to yonder safe"—and the judge pointed to an elaborately gotten up affair which stood in a corner of the room—"for the purpose of getting out some papers connected with a real estate matter which I had called to see him about, took from one of the center drawers the will and held it up, saying:

"There's the will, judge, and it is duly signed and witnessed; you and Doctor MacGregor, you know, are the executors, and I rely upon you both to see that everything is arranged correctly: that is, if I don't change my mind and destroy the will before I die," and he said this with a sardonic smile.

"This was a dig at me, you see, for when he was deaf to my remonstrances, I became a little nettled, and told him when he came to reflect

upon the matter he might think it wise to change his mind."

"Nothing of that kind was likely with him," the doctor assured, "for he was as obstinate a man as ever drew the breath of life."

"For which reason I am perfectly satisfied that Campbell Auchinclose never destroyed the will," Judge Colamore declared. "His remark to me was designed to be sarcastic. As the doctor has said, he was an extremely dogmatic man, and it annoyed him excessively to have any one dare to interfere with him."

"The few words I spoke in behalf of Miss Virginia had rankled in his mind, and he said what he did in regard to the will for the express purpose of showing that my remonstrances had not produced the slightest effect upon him.

"The doctor and I waited a reasonable time after the funeral services, and then, in company with an expert, whom we employed to open the safe, for Auchinclose had passed away so quickly that he did not have a chance to reveal the secret of the combination, we proceeded to examine matters.

"The expert opened the safe after considerable trouble—bear in mind that it was securely locked—and then, to the astonishment, both of the doctor—to whom I revealed the secret of the will—and myself, that precious document was not to be found!

"We found the envelope, though, in which it had been inclosed. I easily identified it, as it had come from my office, and was of a rather peculiar pattern, or rather color.

"Nothing else in the safe was missing, as far as we could determine."

"But why did the fact that you failed to find the will suggest to you that Mr. Auchinclose had been murdered?" asked the detective.

"Well, it did not," the judge answered. "That is, not directly."

"Of course, when we discovered that the paper was gone we immediately suspected foul-play in the matter," the doctor exclaimed. "And when we consulted we arrived at some conclusions which before, in the confusion of the moment, had not occurred to us. Thus the absence of the will so excited our suspicions that, naturally, we asked ourselves if there had been anything suspicious about Mr. Auchinclose's death."

"And did you decide that there were just grounds for suspicion of foul play?" asked Joe Phenix.

"We did," the old judge answered, decidedly. "Mr. Auchinclose when found was reclining on the sofa in his room, not disrobed for the night but dressed in his everyday clothes.

"Now, so methodical a man never varied in his manner of doing certain things. When taking the sleeping draught, by the doctor's advice, he always swallowed it the last thing before going to bed, and the fact that he was not in his night-clothes when discovered dead makes the doctor and myself both believe that he did not take his medicine on that fatal night."

"How then came he to his death?" the detective inquired.

"By morphine, administered to him in his brandy, which he drank nightly before going to bed," replied the judge.

"Although not addicted to the free use of ardent spirits, yet he always had wine on his table, and for years had been accustomed to take a draught of brandy before retiring to rest. On this particular night his brandy was drugged; he drank, and, drinking, died," confidently explained the doctor.

"I see; it would be possible to compass the death of a man in such a manner," assented Phenix.

"Understand, Judge Colamore and I did not arrive at this conclusion until after the funeral," the doctor resumed. "In the beginning we decided that the fatal overdose had been taken by accident, and it was not until we discovered the will's disappearance that we began carefully to examine the case."

"Do you suppose the combination of the safe was known to any one but Auchinclose?" asked Phenix.

"I have no reason to suppose it was," the lawyer answered.

"My explanation of the riddle of the safe being securely closed, and yet the most important document in it gone, is this:—

"It was Mr. Auchinclose's custom to take his evening dram of brandy in this room—his night-cap, as he called it. He would sit in his easy-chair, look over the evening papers, and leisurely dispose of his goblet of cognac—his regular allowance—and a couple of biscuits; then, closing the safe and throwing the combination, go up-stairs to bed—his bedroom being on the floor directly over this apartment.

"Now, on the night of the tragedy, I infer that he was in this room, occupied as usual with the papers. The liquor was drugged, and he soon felt himself growing stupid. Seeing this, without thinking of its cause he arose, and, forgetting about the safe, he started for his bed. He managed to reach his bedroom, but then sank upon the sofa, overcome by the drug, and soon sunk into the stupor of death."

"I comprehend," the detective remarked,

"the party who committed the crime was on the alert—took advantage of the safe being open to abstract the will, and then closed the door."

"Exactly! that is our theory."

"Apparently, then, Mr. Auchinclose was murdered so that the will might be stolen?"

"That is the only motive so far as we can see."

"And who benefits by the disappearance of this will—the niece, this Miss Virginia?"

Both the lawyer and doctor looked grave.

"Yes, in the absence of the will, Miss Virginia inherits all, for she is the only living relative," Judge Colamore admitted.

"True, if it was generally known that a will had been in existence, and its contents had been ascertained, some of the institutions who would have profited might attempt a contest. There are plenty of lawyers who will try such desperate chances, but the words of Auchinclose to me, in regard to destroying the document, would be sure to upset the scheme."

"But, of course, as a professional man, I should not reveal the contents of the will, particularly under such circumstances as now exist, for, from the beginning, I regarded the document as being terribly unjust, and I am not sorry it is missing."

"I share the judge's views in that respect," the doctor observed. "Still, as the disappearance of the will seems to suggest to us that there was something wrong about the death of Mr. Auchinclose, we think it our duty to put a man of your profession upon the track."

"But understand, Mr. Phenix, we do not think there is the least ground for suspecting that Miss Virginia had the slightest connection with this tragedy, although there is not the least doubt that she will benefit greatly by Mr. Auchinclose's death and the disappearance of the will," the old lawyer hastened to add.

"In fact, as far as I can see, and I am better acquainted with Mr. Auchinclose's affairs than any one else—possibly I ought to say I am the only man who knows anything about them at all—Miss Virginia is *solely* benefited by Mr. Auchinclose's death, and no one else will gain in the least thereby."

"But for all that, I am perfectly satisfied she is innocent of all guilty knowledge. She is yet in her 'teens, as sweet and amiable a girl as there is in all New York."

"Then, too, she was at school when the tragedy happened. Or, to speak more correctly, she left school on the very day the tragedy occurred, and arrived home that night, some twenty hours from the time of Mr. Auchinclose's death."

Phenix might have suggested that the very fact of Miss Virginia's absence at the time of the tragedy was no proof that she had not instigated the crime; but the detective seldom made suggestions, and so he merely nodded his head to what was said.

"Is there any one in the house upon whom your suspicions fall?" Phenix asked.

"Not a soul!" the old lawyer answered, decidedly. "The servants are all trustworthy, and the most of them have been in Mr. Auchinclose's service for years."

For a few moments the detective was silent.

"It is a difficult case, gentlemen," he said, at last. "And, as far as I can see, we have no clew. Two things only appear to me to be certainties: first, your suspicion that Mr. Auchinclose's death was due to foul play is correct; second, whoever committed the crime was an inmate of the mansion and well acquainted with the merchant's habits."

"Undoubtedly I assented the judge, and MacGregor nodded affirmatively.

"Who is in charge of the mansion now?"

"I am," said the judge. "Miss Virginia, being under age, has chosen me for her guardian. I am an old bachelor, you know, with no settled habitation, having lived at hotels about all my life, so it was no trouble for me to take up my quarters here."

"Very good arrangement, as it will be necessary for me to introduce a couple of spies in the house—a man and woman," the detective announced.

"That can be arranged without trouble."

"These two will hold no communication with you, and you must treat them as if you had no suspicion of their true character," the detective cautioned.

"You must make the discovery, you know, that you require two servants, for whom you will advertise in the regular manner."

"Yes, yes; let me see," and the judge reflected for a moment. "How will a valet for myself and a lady's maid for Miss Virginia answer?"

"Admirably!"

"But I say, how will I know *your* people, when they apply?" the judge asked.

"The man will bring you a recommendation signed by General Josephs, and the woman one from a Mrs. Broodway; and, judge, have the kindness not to allow either of the parties to suspect that *you* know them for what they really are."

"Of course; I understand; it might embarrass them and so interfere with their work."

The interview now ended, and Phenix was

smuggled out of the house with the same precaution with which he had been brought into it.

Hardly had the three left the library when something strange happened.

There were two large bookcases in the room with shelves in the upper part and drawers below.

The front of one of these drawers was pushed out.

It was only a dummy drawer—a front, but nothing more—and from the space behind this front a man emerged.

Despite the judge's precautions a spy had played the eavesdropper and overheard every word of the conversation with Joe Phenix.

CHAPTER VI.

ON THE SCENT.

PROMPTLY the next morning the judge proceeded to prepare the ground for carrying out the detective's plan.

At the breakfast-table he suggested to Virginia that it was high time she was provided with a maid like other young ladies in her rank of life.

There were only four at the meal, the judge, the young lady, her friend Miss Birdseye, and the housekeeper, who was a ladylike, good-looking woman of thirty-five, and a pronounced brunette, who, by her face, plainly showed that she was of foreign extraction.

Marie Du Burg she was called, and had been in Mr. Auchinclose's service for over five years. She was very quiet and ladylike, finely educated and accomplished, and a most excellent household manager.

The retired merchant evidently thought she was a jewel of a housekeeper, and at times was wont to speak so highly of the lady that some of his intimate acquaintances were of the opinion that one day he might be "fool enough to marry her."

Both the judge and Doctor MacGregor were rather inclined to this belief, that is, in regard to the marrying, but not as to his making a fool of himself, for, as MacGregor observed, with his Scotch bluntness:

"If I was a young and pretty woman like Miss Du Burg I wouldn't marry such a dogmatic thick-head as Auchinclose, if he was worth fifty millions instead of five."

And, in passing, it may be remarked that it was the retired merchant's opinion that another such an obstinate idiot as Doctor MacGregor did not exist upon the earth!

Despite the favor which the housekeeper had found in Auchinclose's sight, she did not in the least presume upon it, and so, with her quiet, although firm ways, was a general favorite in the big house.

Even Virginia had a high respect for her, although many a meddling gossip had suggested that it was more than likely her uncle in time would marry the handsome and ladylike woman; but this never produced the slightest effect upon the young girl, although she believed that it was more than likely to happen.

And the housekeeper, whether naturally or by artful design, treated Virginia in such a way that the niece couldn't help liking her; a straightforward and fair-minded creature herself, she saw no guile in others.

The housekeeper's story was a simple one.

She was of French extraction, and had been reared in England, living at intervals in Paris and London, her father being a merchant, with business houses in both capitals, so she was equally familiar with the French and English languages.

When she was in her twentieth year her father failed in business, and the loss of his fortune so preyed upon him that he soon died.

Then her mother and herself came to America to live with a relative at New Orleans. When they arrived they made the unwelcome discovery that the relative and all his family had been swept away by the yellow fever, and, before the new-comers could manage to leave the city, the mother also perished, a victim of the dire scourge which sometimes so terribly ravages the Queen City of the South.

Brown thus upon her own resources, a stranger in a strange land, she was compelled to get her living as best she could.

Thanks to the accomplishments which she possessed, and the gifts which Heaven had bestowed upon her, she succeeded in making a comfortable living, and, in time came to New York and entered Mr. Auchinclose's service.

In answer to the judge's suggestion, Virginia said she thought she would like a maid very much, and Miss Birdseye was much pleased at the idea, and Miss Du Burg thought a maid would be a desirable addition, if she was a nice one.

"I will send an advertisement to the newspaper when I go to the city to-day, and at the same time I think I will advertise for a valet, for I need one."

The judge did as he proposed.

One of the morning dailies duly appeared with the notices, and the judge had hardly finished his breakfast when the applicants began to make their appearance.

The second girl who called bore a letter of

recommendation from "Mrs. Broodway," and the judge was much impressed with her appearance before he ascertained this fact.

She was, apparently, about twenty-five; was of medium height, was neatly dressed, and was bright and intelligent. Her name she said was Kate Scott.

The judge duly engaged her, and she stated she would enter upon her duties that evening.

There were three male applicants, none of whom had a letter from "General Josephs," though, and so they were all dismissed.

The fourth man was a rather dull-looking fellow, with light flaxen hair, a face bronzed by exposure to the sun, and who appeared like a German; and to the judge's astonishment this was the man who bore the recommendation!

He was engaged, of course, and said he was prepared to come immediately, just as soon as he could go for his things.

The name he gave was Carl Hemmenstein.

By nightfall both of the new-comers were formally installed in their respective places.

As the reader has probably suspected, the new valet and maid was Joe Phenix in person and his favorite female decoy.

Being always careful to keep Miss Kate in the background when the explosion came, so that her agency was never suspected, the detective allowed her to give the name by which she was known.

Joe Phenix himself, with that wonderful art which really seemed to approach the marvelous, had so perfectly disguised himself that even the sharp-eyed judge failed to recognize him.

A week later we again take up the thread of our story.

During that time the new-comers had become well acquainted with the rest of the servants, and, as they performed their duties in a satisfactory manner, they had come to be looked upon as fixtures in the establishment.

The maid was ready and quick—a girl who had received a fair education, and possessed considerable native grace and aptitude.

The man, although attentive enough to his work, was undeniably stupid, but, as he obeyed to the letter all the orders he received, he got along very well. He was not particularly good company when down-stairs in the servants' quarters, for his command of the English language was not good, and then, whenever it was possible, he had a pipe in his mouth—a circumstance which excited the anger of both the butler and the cook, the two powers who reigned supreme in the lower regions.

The result was that about all the spare time the valet had spent in and around the stables, in the company of the coachman and hostler, where he could enjoy his pipe in peace.

Miss Scott, on the contrary, having contrived to get on the right side of these ruling powers, was always welcome when she came downstairs.

Apparently, no communication took place between the valet and lady's maid.

But they were in constant consultation, all the same.

By chance they were assigned to adjoining rooms, which were on the second story in one of the wings of the mansion exclusively occupied by the servants.

A closet in each room was divided only by a thin partition; so by means of a hole in this partition the two were able to consult in secret.

CHAPTER VII.

SEEKING A CLEW.

PHENIX had said to his decoy:

"Allow a week to go by without coming to any opinion. Keep your own counsel, as I will keep mine. At the end of the week we ought to be able to see how the land lies."

The week had expired, and now, at midnight, the two were in council.

The lights were out, and the closets being furthest from the hallway, no spy could overhear any conversation between the two; but, to still further baffle any watcher, Phenix so arranged a dummy upon the couch that any one peeping through the keyhole into the moonlit room would have been willing to swear it was a sleeping man.

Kate Scott was not obliged to take this precaution, for the window in her room, being on the other side of the house, was not exposed to the rays of the moon.

All was still; Pine Tree Hall was buried in slumber; so, unless some one was playing the spy, there was no necessity for all this precaution; but the acute detective would have been terribly annoyed to lose a trick through carelessness, and therefore took as much precaution as if surrounded by a legion of enemies.

"The week is up, Kate; have you used your eyes?" Joe Phenix began the interview.

"Oh, yes."

"And what have you discovered?"

"In the first place, that our mission in this house is suspected."

"You think so?"

"I feel sure of it."

"You are right; I think the same."

"Both of us are being watched; instead of our

The Man of Three.

playing the spy, some one is playing the spy upon us."

"Correct, my girl!"

"Do you think it possible that the judge has revealed to any one our mission here?"

"No; the judge is too shrewd a lawyer to make such a mistake."

"But it has leaked out in some way."

"Yes; and I believe I have discovered how it got out. At the very beginning I became conscious that some parties in this house suspected our true character, so I set my wits at work to discover how the truth became known."

"My interview with the judge and the doctor, when this plan was arranged, took place in the library, and, although they were sure of our security from being overheard or observed, yet I became satisfied that some one had played the spy on that occasion; there was no other way in which our secret could have been discovered. Hence, I examined the library for the hiding-place of the eavesdropper."

"And did you find it?"

"I did. At the first glance I saw that the drawers in the bottoms of the book-cases were big enough to hold a man. They were all locked securely, but my skeleton-keys soon opened them, and one I found was a dummy; all there was to the drawer was the front. It had evidently been arranged for a hiding-place, and the moment I made this discovery I understood how our mission became known."

"After all, I don't know but what it is an advantage," Kate remarked, in a thoughtful way.

"For the plotters to have discovered our secret?"

"Yes."

"The same thought has occurred to me."

"If they had not suspected our errand they would not have kept the stealthy watch upon us, and so, by their own action, indicated that they were the very prey we seek."

"Very true," Joe Phenix replied; "skillful as are these plotters, and desperate as is the game they are playing, yet they cannot avoid betraying themselves by the stealthy watch they keep upon us. But, Kate, to come to particulars. Whom do you suspect?"

"The housekeeper, Miss Du Burg, first and foremost."

"Yes, a woman of brains and dauntless courage, despite her quiet, ladylike ways."

It is the gossip of the servants that Mr. Auchinclose was engaged to be married to her—and, in fact, it was the opinion of the most of them that the pair were secretly married, but, as after his death she did not set up a claim to be his widow, that idea was abandoned."

"Do you think there is really any truth in the report?"

"Oh, yes, I do not doubt it in the least, although the pair were very careful how they behaved when any one was around, but a week or so before Mr. Auchinclose's death there was a stormy scene between the two, some portions of which were overheard by the servants, anxiously on the watch. Miss Du Burg declared she was going away, and he begged her to stay, saying that soon he would do what was right. Then the question was put by her—'Suppose you were to die suddenly?' and he replied that his will was made, and by it she was left enough to enable her to live like a queen all the rest of her days."

"And the man lied to her," was Joe Phenix's comment. "She was not even mentioned in the will."

"But if she discovered that fact revenge might lead her to murder him, although she did not in the least improve her position by so doing."

"No, I do not think she would act in that way. It would be her best game to have the man live, for while he was alive there was a chance he might do something for her, or she do something with him. But now come to number two."

"Marmaduke Spriggins, the waiter, is in the game."

"Yes, I spotted him also. Something about that man suggests a jail-bird to me. If I guess aright that fellow has 'done time' across the water."

"Those are the only two I suspect."

"Right again! I fail to catch on to anybody else. In my opinion both of these two are old birds, but not native to this clime. They are transplants. The woman is a foreign adventuress, and the man a London professional."

"You are right, in my opinion."

"And the presence of two such people in the house at the same time leads to the inference that they had something to do with the murderer."

"But the housekeeper has been here for five years and the man for only two."

"Possibly they have been acting on the 'square,' or it may be that the woman, having a good thing of it, came to the conclusion that honesty was the best policy until some powerful motive urged her to this crime."

"As for the man, he may have been on the 'cross' all the time, you know, keeping his situation here for a blind."

"Yes, that is true."

"Well, so far as the two are concerned, we haven't secured any clew; the only thing we have to go upon is our suspicion that they are not all right," Joe Phenix remarked, thoughtfully.

"My impression is that we have spotted the right parties, although we have nothing but our instinct to trust in the matter."

"I wouldn't make that confession, Kate, to any one else, for it really seems ridiculous. A detective ought not to act on mere impressions."

"Very true, Mr. Phenix," Kate Scott replied, quickly, "but I have noticed in many cases that you seem to scent a rascal by instinct!"

"Right you are, there. I don't exactly understand how I arrive at my conclusions sometimes. As you say, it seems to be by instinct rather than by reason. Now for this case: I suspect that one of these two, or perhaps both, had a hand in the murder. But if so, what was the motive? The only person benefited is the girl, Virginia, and I am satisfied she hadn't anything to do with the terrible crime."

"Oh, no," cried Kate, quickly. "She is a dear, good girl, and about as near perfection as any woman ever comes."

"Apparently, then, by killing Auchinclose, the housekeeper—if it was she who did the deed—struck a blow at herself."

"Yes, unless by destroying the will and so throwing all the money and property into the hands of the girl, she has some deep-laid plan by which in the future she hopes to make a big strike."

"A shrewd thought, Kate, and I should not be surprised if you have hit upon the truth," Joe Phenix remarked, approvingly. "I did not make any mistake when I introduced you to a detective's life. But is this all you have learned?"

"Yes; all."

"No clew, really; only an additional puzzle to solve, eh?"

"Yes, but if we can solve it we will strike the clew to the murderer."

"Right; and in my investigations I have hit upon yet another puzzle which perplexes me. By means of my pipe I contrived to get myself banished to the stables, thinking there was a chance to pick up some information in that quarter."

"And you succeeded?"

"Yes, in stumbling upon the third puzzle, as I told you, of which I am ashamed to say I can't give the solution. Listen, and try your wits on it."

"Michael McFairly is the coachman."

"Yes, I have seen him—a short, thick-set, red-bearded Irishman."

"True, and a tolerably sensible fellow, except that he is addicted to drinking too much whisky when he has a chance of not being found out. You have heard the story of the adventures the two girls met with when they came home from boarding-school?"

"Yes, and what a lucky escape they had from the ruffians who attempted to rob them."

"McFairly was the coachman who drove that night. Having to wait some time, owing to the train being late, he improved the opportunity to 'throw in a few balls,' as he terms the drinking operation; that is, to take his own words for it—he went into a saloon in the neighborhood, made some acquaintances there and got decidedly drunk. From that first saloon he went with his acquaintances into another saloon, had more drinks, and after that doesn't remember anything until he awoke and found himself lying on his own bed in his room over the stable, all dressed, and the morning light shining in through the window!"

"That was strange."

"All the particulars of his meeting with the two girls, the homeward drive, the horse losing a shoe after crossing Harlem Bridge, and his taking the beast to be shod—a queer time, about eleven at night, to get a smith to work, mind you—then the harness breaking, and his again taking the horse away—all these things are utterly strange to him, and he has no more remembrance of them than if they had never happened."

"When the story got out among the servants, and they joked him about it, he had sense enough to hold his tongue and not admit that he hadn't the slightest idea of what they were talking about; but the affair has worried him, and, in strict confidence, he confided in me, and asked me what kind of liquor it could have been that so completely took away his memory and yet permitted him to drive the ladies safely home—for, as he admitted, when he usually got drunk, he knew pretty well what he was doing, but was never able to do much, as his limbs were always more affected by the liquor than his head."

"It is a strange affair!" Kate repeated.

"Yes, and now comes the strangest part of it," Joe Phenix remarked, impressively:—"Without saying anything to the coachman, I examined the horse and harness, to find that all the shoes on the horse are old ones and show no signs of having been touched, for a month at least, and the most searching inspection failed to reveal any place where the harness had been recently mended."

"This is indeed most singular and mysterious."

"It is; and that it has something to do with the other puzzle is my impression, although I am not able to see any connection between the two.—Hush!" then cried the detective, abruptly.

"What is it?" asked the decoy, in a whisper.

"There is some one on the roof of the piazza, moving toward my window."

Through the half-open door of the closet Phenix peered.

He commanded a view of the window, yet was himself concealed.

The figure of a man appeared on the outside and began to raise the window with the utmost caution.

"Aha, my boy, you'll be my game in a minute!" the detective muttered, as the man commenced to climb in through the now open sash.

CHAPTER VIII.

AN OLD ACQUAINTANCE.

THANKS to the moonlight which illuminated the room, Joe Phenix had a good view of the man, climbing so stealthily in through the window, although he was not able to distinguish his face, for the fellow had his coat-collar turned up, and the miserable old felt hat he wore was pulled low down over his forehead. He was rather undersized in stature and build, and was dressed in a wretched old suit.

The detective, from his ample experience, was able to "size" the fellow up immediately, and was surprised to see him attempt this kind of work, so out of the line of the sneak-thief, who rarely has the pluck, or the ability, to undertake to "crack a crib" after this fashion.

The man had not attempted to force an entrance into the house, but had "shinned" up one of the pillars of the piazza, trusting to find some window looking out upon the piazza, unfastened—in which hope he was not disappointed, for the window in the detective's room was in that condition; so an entrance was easy.

But what sought he? Plunder, or was the servant detective himself detected and was this the bravo selected to dispose of the sleuth?

The last resource of desperate men is to kill the tracker; that will surely put an end to the pursuit.

It might be so in this case; it had been so in others.

But when Joe Phenix surveyed the slender proportions of the intruder and thought of his own muscular powers he smiled grimly, as he reflected how poor a chance the bravo would stand in a personal encounter with a man like himself.

After the intruder had crawled through the window and gained the floor he halted for a moment, gazed earnestly upon the dummy stretched upon the bed, which was so skillfully arranged that the fellow had not the slightest suspicion it was not the figure of a sleeping man.

Then he advanced with catlike steps toward the bed.

It was Phenix's idea that the intruder would draw a knife and attempt at one single blow to remove the man whose existence was dangerous to the gang; but to Joe's surprise, no such attempt was made, and when the fellow came within six feet of the bed he dropped upon his hands and knees, and crawling with the utmost caution to the head of the bed he thrust his hand under the pillow of the supposed sleeper.

It was as much as Joe Phenix could do to refrain from laughing; the burglar was but a sneak-thief, after all, and would find nothing under that pillow to reward him for his night's work.

"What has the bloke done with his stuff?" muttered the disgusted thief in an audible whisper. "Mebbe his sugar is in his clothes. Where be they?"

Phenix recognized the voice! The intruder was an old acquaintance!

"Up to your old tricks, Leg-of-Mutton?" the detective remarked.

The still kneeling man turned his head and stared up into the face of Joe Phenix!—scared, astonished and utterly perplexed, as he slowly arose to his feet.

"Who be you, anyhow?" he demanded, sulkily, making no attempt to dash for the window.

"Why, don't you know me?" asked the detective. "I'm your old friend, Joe Phenix!"

The man drew a long breath.

"Well, blow me if I did know you!" he said, casting an inquiring glance at the supposed sleeper.

"There's no one in the bed—that is only a dummy."

"Well, may I be jiggered if you haven't done this trick up brown, Joseph! I'm an old 'un at the business, an' when the wool is pulled over my eyes by any sick trick as this, it must be a good one!" and the defeated old sneak seated himself upon the side of the bed and stared in the face of the detective.

"Do you remember the last time we met?" Phenix asked, in a business-like manner.

"Oh, yes; you advised me to plead guilty and

said you would do your best to get me off with a light sentence."

"And I kept my word, didn't I?"

"Like a noble Roman, and I didn't forget it, either," the Leg-of-Mutton replied.

"You was the only one of all the cops who was willing to believe I was the cool of the others, and not the captain of the gang."

"Yes; I felt satisfied it was so and as you were disposed to be reasonable and not make any trouble, I was inclined to let you down easily; but, I say, old fellow, you haven't kept your word with *me!*" Phenix remarked, with a grave expression upon his face. "You promised me if I would do what I could for you that, when you got out, you would try and turn over a new leaf."

"Well, now, I wish I may die if I didn't try my best to do it, but I couldn't get work, and I held out ag'in' temptation until I had pawned everything I could raise a cent on. If you don't believe me, jest look at the rags I'm wearing."

"There ain't no Jew in Baxter street would be willing to give me a quarter for all I've got on and when I found there wasn't any chance for me in the city I came out into this 'ere country on a tramp, but the lay had been worked too much and the folks set the dog on me when I axed for a bite to eat; so, in disgust, you know, I spotted this crib and thought I would see if I couldn't make a raise, and if I got a stake I was going to go peddling, honor bright!"

"Well, I am not going to doubt your word, and I will give you another chance," Phenix remarked. "I can use a man like you, if you can be trusted."

"Wish I may die if I would go back on a man like you, who has done the square thing by me!" the other declared.

"I am going to trust you. I want a spy in this very mansion, and I think you will fill the bill."

"Mister Phenix, I'll serve you as faithfully as a blarsted dog, you know."

"Do so, and you will find it will be the best thing you ever did. Here are ten dollars; that will rig you out decently. Then come here tomorrow noon; be particular to get here near twelve and come to the stables. The hostler has been talking about getting a man to help him, and if you offer to work cheap you will be apt to get the place. I will be on hand to put in a good word for you, but be careful not to allow any one to suspect any acquaintanceship between us, for that would upset everything. Do you know anything about horses?"

"Wasn't I a butcher-boy once and used for to drive and take care of the 'oss?" the tramp exclaimed. "That is where I get my name, Leg-of-Mutton, you know, when, by rights, I ought to be called Jerry Benjamins."

"You will answer, then, all right; and, mind your eye, now, for if you serve me well in this case I will make you one of my shadows and give you a chance to earn an honest living."

"Oh, you can take your 'davy on that! You kin lean on me every time now."

"Very good! After you are installed in your new position I will get an opportunity to explain to you what I want. Now, be off!"

"Like a bird!" And the tramp retreated as he had come.

Phenix felt that he had scored a point. Here was a spy who certainly would not be suspected.

CHAPTER IX.

AN ODD PROPOSAL.

A MONTH has passed, during which time nothing of moment enough to be worth the detailing occurred at the mansion.

Leg-of-Mutton had made his appearance, decently attired, at Pine Tree Hall, found his way to the stables, begged a job, as he had been instructed by Phenix, succeeded in getting the place, and soon got on good terms with all the servants.

Before he had been three days in the place, Phenix gave him his instructions, and Leg-of-Mutton promised to obey them to the letter.

As he declared to the detective, he believed he had found his right vocation at last; the trade of spy seemed to exactly suit him.

During the month Miss Birdseye had become like one of the family. As Virginia was now her own mistress she had declared to her friend that she must not leave her.

"You are like a sister to me, and you must make your home at Pine Tree Hall, at least until your mother returns from abroad and summons you to go with her."

There was a peculiar look in Pauline's eyes at the mention of her mother, but all she said was that she would write and ask permission, and she did not think there would be any difficulty about the matter.

Nor was there, for the permission was graciously given, and Pauline's mother expressed herself as being extremely pleased that her daughter had made so valuable a friend.

The housekeeper, perceiving how attached the two young ladies were to each other, took particular care to pay extreme attention to Miss

Birdseye, but strange as it may appear, she did not succeed in making a favorable impression upon the young girl—a fact Pauline was too prudent to allow to become known.

Although exactly the same age as Virginia, yet in experience and worldly wisdom she was far beyond her. All the heiress of Pine Tree Hall knew of life she had gathered from books, while her companion, young as she was, had drank deeply of the cup of wisdom, composed of actual and varied experience.

And Pauline, too, was of a naturally suspicious disposition, and not prone to believe that people were always really as they appeared to be, but Virginia, being without guile herself, had no suspicion of it in others. So the two were well mated.

Like many another acute person, Miss Du Burg overacted her part. She evinced so great a desire to make Miss Birdseye think well of her that it excited the wonder of the girl, and set her to surmising in regard to the reason.

Why should the housekeeper care to secure her friendship?

Pauline had one merit: although she was on her guard against all the world—even against Virginia, dearly as she loved her—she was frank with herself, and never attempted to deceive her mind with the belief that she was any better or wiser than she was.

When she came to reflect upon the way the housekeeper behaved to her, she tried to get at the purpose or motive of the woman's action by thinking how she herself would act under like circumstances.

"Now, to put myself in her place," she mused:—"would I take such extraordinary pains to please her if she was situated as I am? Decidedly not!"

"Who and what am I? A young lady who happened to meet this heiress at a boarding-school, and was fortunate enough to become her most intimate friend; that is the sole claim I have to the consideration of anybody in this house."

"Correctly speaking, I am nobody. I am not rich, have no influential friends, and my story in regard to my mother is not one that will bear the test of a strict examination."

"Now this Miss Du Burg is an old and experienced woman of the world. She is no young girl, or country dame, with little knowledge of the dark and devious ways of this life; so, as far as I can see, there is no above-board reason why she should treat me with any more than common politeness; and the fact that she does do so is proof that she has something in view not clearly apparent. Now then, what is it?"

The shrewd young girl had taxed her wits considerably over this problem, but, as far as she could see, there was but one explanation:

The housekeeper desired to be on the best of terms with Miss Virginia, and she thought that by paying devoted attention to the heiress's friend she would secure her as an ally, and so be sure, when opportunity occurred, she could rely upon a good word from her.

"But why on earth does the woman take so much trouble when there is so little to be gained?" queried Pauline, when she had finally come to this conclusion.

This was a puzzle, to solve which she resolved to keep a close watch upon Miss Du Burg.

Therefore Pauline accepted Miss Du Burg's attentions with apparently most charming innocence; but at the end of the month, Pauline was no wiser than when she began.

She was right in regard to Miss Du Burg; she was a remarkably smart woman and a shrewd manager, despite her quiet ways. She had ruled Auchinclose, and through him the mansion, and the merchant was not conscious of the fact, so marvelously had the woman managed.

And even now, she had supreme control, for Judge Colamore believed implicitly in her, and Virginia was content to allow her to issue all commands, although the housekeeper always went through the form of asking her young mistress's opinion, and when the young lady in her ignorance would say: "You had better arrange the matter; you understand more about it than I do," the housekeeper, with a look which seemed to say that she did not feel sure of this, would pay Miss Birdseye the compliment of asking her advice, which that shrewd young lady never thought of giving, for it was her game to play the character of a rather frivolous young person.

But one particular afternoon, when the two girls, and Miss Du Burg were in the city on a shopping excursion, having been driven down in the carriage, a circumstance occurred which caused Pauline to wonder if she had not made a mistake in setting down the housekeeper as being a woman of extraordinary determination and free from weakness.

After the ladies had finished their shopping and had taken their places in the carriage for driving home, an odd incident occurred.

During their absence a handbill containing the advertisement of an astrologer had been thrown into the carriage.

"Madame Mendoza, the seventh daughter of a seventh daughter, who had exhibited her powers

before all the crowned heads of Europe, would read the future, for ladies only, at one dollar per visit."

Miss Du Burg read the advertisement aloud and astonished her hearers by announcing her belief that some marvelously-gifted creatures were able to predict coming events.

"Let us try and see what fortune is in store for us, then," cried Virginia, catching immediately at the idea.

CHAPTER X.

THE HOUSE OF MYSTERY.

"WOULD you really like to go?" exclaimed Miss Du Burg, as though amazed.

"Indeed I would!" Virginia declared.

"And so would I!" Miss Birdseye added.

"I never had my fortune told," the heiress admitted.

"Oh, I have," Pauline remarked, "but not by any professional."

"Well, I do not believe much in amateur fortune-tellers," the housekeeper remarked, as though she had given the subject serious consideration.

"Do you believe in any of them?" Miss Auchinclose asked; "don't you think all fortune-tellers cheats and humbugs?"

"Oh, no, my dear Miss Auchinclose; indeed I do not."

"Well, of course, from actual knowledge I don't know anything about such people, but my impression is that none of them are at all reliable—that is, you could not place any confidence in what they tell you."

"Well, I once thought as you did," Miss Du Burg remarked, "in fact a greater unbeliever about such things than myself would have been hard to find. But at last there came a time when my eyes were opened to the truth, and I was obliged to believe that some of these people who profess to reveal the future really had marvelous powers."

"Yes, I know; I have heard such stories, too, but isn't it the result of accident?" Virginia rejoined.

"Oh, I do not think so. There are many doubters who try to explain what they really cannot understand by crying out that it is merely due to the chapter of accidents, but, from my own knowledge, I am sure that in the cases to which refer it was not so."

"What do you think, Miss Birdseye?" and the lady turned to Pauline.

"Oh, I believe there is something in it," the young girl replied promptly, as if to encourage the idea of a visit to Madame Mendoza.

"There isn't the least doubt in my mind that some of these astrologers and clairvoyants can read the future," Miss Du Burg went on, "but of course there are many pretenders and impostors deserving of being sent to jail; but the true clairvoyant must not be judged by these miserable creatures, any more than the true diamond should be confounded with the worthless imitation."

Miss Birdseye looked at the speaker with curious eyes.

"My dear Miss Virginia, believe me, I know what I am speaking about when I say that the power possessed by some of these clairvoyants is wonderful," the housekeeper continued. "I do not say that *she* is one of the marvelous ones, because I do not know anything about this Madame Mendoza; but if *she* is a true clairvoyant, undoubtedly she will be able to astonish you."

"Well, we will go, anyway—that is, if you have no objection," Virginia said.

"Oh, no, not in the least," Miss Du Burg hastened to assert. "Even if this one is a humbug we will get the worth of our money in seeing how the woman acts."

"Yes, it will be quite an adventure," Pauline exclaimed.

This "mistress of the future" resided but a short distance away, on one of the cross streets leading out of Broadway; so the driver was directed to proceed up Broadway to the corner of the street indicated, for, as Miss Du Burg remarked: "It will be better to leave the carriage at the corner and walk to the house. I shouldn't like to drive to the door."

The seekers after knowledge found the house they sought to be a plain, unpretending, two-story, old-fashioned brick dwelling, and a little tin sign by the side of the door bore the clairvoyant's name and her business.

In answer to the bell an aged man with flowing white hair and beard came to the door; he was dressed all in black, with a long-skirted coat something like an old-fashioned Jewish gabardine.

Miss Du Burg acted as spokeswoman.

"We wish to consult Madame Mendoza," she said.

The old man bowed and waved his hand to a door at the extreme end of the entry, which would be in utter darkness when the front door was closed, if it had not been for a violet-hued, strange-shaped cut-glass lantern suspended in the center of the passageway.

The ladies advanced along this entry and the door closed noiselessly behind them.

As they came to the door it opened to admit them.

The apartment was a medium-sized one, fur-

nished in Oriental style, and in a large arm-chair sat an aged woman, with silver-gray hair and a dark, Gypsy-like face.

She was dressed in a peculiar, old-fashioned velvet dress, black in hue and covered with all sorts of quaint figures embroidered in colored silk.

She rose as her visitors entered, and after they had passed the portal, this door, too, closed noiselessly behind them.

An odd appearance the clairvoyant presented, looking exactly like the ancient dames who figure in the old-fashioned pictures of three centuries ago.

"Madame Mendoza?" said Miss Du Burg.

"I am Madame Mendoza," the woman replied, in a deep, solemn tone.

We have neglected to mention that this apartment would also have been plunged in total gloom, if, like the entry, it had not been lighted by a lantern suspended in the center of the room. It was also of cut glass, ruby-hued, and the peculiar-tinted light falling upon the odd, Oriental furniture and the dark embroidered velvet hangings which concealed the walls made a strange picture.

Then, too, the oil which burned in the lamp gave out a strange perfume, something like the incense used in church ceremonies.

Altogether the room was well calculated to inspire a feeling of awe, and properly prepared the inquirer after knowledge to receive the decrees of the oracle.

"We would like to test your powers," said Miss Du Burg.

"All!"

"No no; I would rather not!" protested Pauline, shrinking close to the side of Virginia, as though affected by the odd surroundings.

The others smiled at what they considered her fright and Virginia, said, encouragingly:

"Oh, you will surely try now that you are here."

"No, no; I would rather not."

"Do not urge her," observed the clairvoyant in her deep voice. "My art is powerless if the applicant is an unwilling one."

Now the truth of the matter was, that, so far from being afraid, Pauline Birdseye did not know fear in the ordinary acceptance of the term, and Madame Mendoza's den really did not produce the least effect upon her, for she had seen just such a scene before and knew how it was managed! What she dreaded was that Madame Mendoza was really and truly a clairvoyant.

Was there a secret in Pauline's life which she was anxious to keep concealed for the present? We shall see.

"Will you go first, or shall I?" whispered Miss Du Burg in the ear of Virginia, and, to the mind of the young heiress, it appeared as if the voice of the housekeeper trembled slightly.

Was it possible that she, too, was affected with fear?

Miss Auchinclose, though much impressed with the novelty of the situation, was not at all afraid of an interview with the oracle; so she volunteered to lead the forlorn hope.

"I will test the lady's powers first," she said, "if you have no objection."

"Oh, no, certainly not," Miss Du Burg hastened to reply.

"Follow me," commanded the Madame Mendoza; "and you, ladies, please have the kindness to remain here."

Then the seeress apparently walked through the solid wall, Virginia following in her footsteps, but the velvet hangings concealed a small passage which led into another room, a closet-like apartment, hung with black cloth; the carpet was black, likewise the ceiling, and a small brass lamp of ancient, boat-like shape, placed on a short pillar, formed apparently of a round block of solid black marble, with its tiny flame, giving no more light than a wax taper, dimly illuminated the room.

There was a high-backed, antique chair in one corner of the apartment, close by the column upon which the lamp stood, and an Oriental divan by its side; this was all the furniture in the apartment.

Madame Mendoza sunk into an arm-chair and motioned to Miss Auchinclose to take a seat upon the divan—which command Virginia obeyed.

"Give me your hand."

The girl did so.

The hand of the clairvoyant was cold as ice.

"Within five minutes I will sleep, and then ask whatever questions you please."

Then the woman closed her eyes, and, as she reclined in the chair, with her head against the somber cushions, the fitful light of the little lamp playing upon her dark, antique face, to the fancy of the girl it seemed as though she had been transported to the dark ages and face to face with one of the inspired prophetesses of the olden time.

The scene was calculated to produce a great impression even upon a strong-nerved man, and therefore it was not strange that it affected the young heiress.

When she judged that the five minutes had expired she said:

"May I question now?"

"Question!" replied the woman in a sepulchral tone.

"Can you tell me my name?"

"Virginia Auchinclose," was the immediate reply.

CHAPTER XI.

THE MAGIC PEBBLE.

The prompt response amazed the girl, but she instantly concluded that by some means the woman had learned her name.

But Virginia was destined to a further surprise when the clairvoyant spoke again.

"No, you are wrong in your surmise," the seeress said. "I did not know you—I did not know that there was any such person in the world as you, therefore I was not able to pronounce your name by reason of any knowledge I possessed."

"You are amazed," she continued, after a moment's pause, "and are vainly endeavoring to account for my knowledge in all ways but the right one. Be satisfied. I am no fraud, but a genuine clairvoyant. I will give a proof that you cannot doubt. Fix your mind upon a subject—on one that you will be sure I cannot have any knowledge of, and then question me."

This certainly was fair enough, and Virginia's mind instantly turned to the episode of the attack of the footpads and her rescue by the good-looking and gentlemanly stranger.

"I have found a subject," she said. "Now tell me what I am thinking about."

"It is night and the road is dark and lonely," replied the medium immediately, and without the slightest hesitation. "You are in a carriage—you and another young lady. Ah, yes! I can see her face distinctly now. It is the young lady who came with you, and who is now in the outer apartment. The road is rough and the coachman drives furiously. Yes, yes, the man has been drinking, and he doesn't use proper caution. The carriage strikes a stone, and the man stops the horse, gets down and finally takes him out of the shafts, and goes away, he says, to get the harness fixed."

"The gloom frightens you, and no wonder! Then come two rough, ugly-looking men; they ask alms, but it is only an excuse, for they mean to rob you. You are in despair when a rescuer appears—a handsome gentleman, with a foreign look. I do not believe he is an American—although he may be a Southerner."

"The ruffians fled at his approach, and you are saved."

Virginia, who had been listening with the utmost attention, drew a long breath at this point as the woman came to a full stop.

It was marvelous; her incredulity was gone; she was satisfied there was no trick about the matter; the woman's art was genuine: she was a true clairvoyant and could read the mind.

"You have guessed my thoughts, and now tell me the name of the gentleman," Virginia asked, with quickened pulse.

"Certainly," replied the madame without hesitation.

"His name—his name is—"

The clairvoyant stopped, her brows knitted as if in deep thought, while the young heiress hung with eager interest on her words.

"Yes, his name is—!"

Madame Mendoza passed her unoccupied hand over her eyes as though there was some obstruction there which prevented her from seeing freely.

"Strange, strange!" she exclaimed; "my sight is clouded—I do not seem to be able to tell his name."

Virginia's disappointment was apparent in her face.

"I am so sorry!" she exclaimed, "for I must own you have excited my curiosity."

"Yes, I am sorry, but I cannot tell you anything about that. There seems to be some mystery about it."

"Well, that is all I think I care to know."

"Stop! Something seems to whisper me that you will see this gentleman again. You wish to see him—he is often in your thoughts."

The girl crimsoned to the temples at this, but she did not attempt to deny the statement.

How could she? It was the truth, and how could she hope to deceive an oracle able to read her very thoughts?

"Is that all?" Madame Mendoza asked.

"Yes."

Then the clairvoyant relinquished Virginia's hand, folded her palms to ether, was silent for a few minutes, and suddenly opened her eyes.

Sitting upright in the chair, she smiled upon her visitor, and expressed the hope that the interview had been satisfactory to her.

"Oh, yes, I think it is really wonderful that you are able to tell as you do," Virginia answered, candidly.

"Did you learn all that you wished to know?"

"No, madame; don't you remember you were not able to tell me in regard to a certain fact?"

"I see; you do not understand," the clairvoyant remarked with a smile. "You think when I am awake I am conscious of all I say in my sleep."

"Yes; is it not so?"

"Indeed it is not. I know absolutely nothing

of what transpires, nor of what I have said. It is not a natural sleep—not like a dream," the madame explained. "After we wake from a dream we often remember all that we have imagined, but the clairvoyant, when she awakes from her trance, is in total ignorance of anything that transpires when she is in such a state."

"Yes, yes, I see."

"I am sorry you did not learn all you wished, because I like to do all I can to satisfy my patrons."

Then a sudden thought seemed to strike the woman.

"There is another way by which ladies can procure information," she observed. "But I do not recommend it, because it is very uncertain and sometimes will not work at all. I call it the magic pebble."

Virginia listened with rapt attention.

"It isn't anything but a crystal globe, fixed in the marble pillar upon which the lamp stands. By gazing intently into the crystal pebble, and at the same time fixing your mind firmly upon what you wish to know, sometimes it is possible for the wish of the seeker after knowledge to be gratified, but I warn you in advance that a great many are disappointed, for the magic pebble seems to be a capricious fortune-teller, and will not always exert its power."

"I should like to try it," the young heiress remarked, her curiosity excited anew.

"As far as I am concerned I shall be glad to have you, and I will try my utmost to concentrate my mind upon you and your affairs, and so exert an influence upon the magic pebble."

"If you will be so kind," Virginia said, beginning to feel a certain awe over the strangeness of the scene.

"Go to the pillar, take the lamp from it and hold it in your hand while you gaze upon the magic pebble. You do not need the ray of the lamp to help you in your examination, for the magic pebble, like the diamond to which it is allied, has the power of giving a light of its own."

Miss Auchinclose rose to her feet.

"Remember! Concentrate your mind as intently as possible upon that which you wish to know," Madame Mendoza warned.

"That is really the secret of the charm. It works on the same idea as the faith cure, and the inability of some of my patrons to keep their minds from wandering from the subject upon which they desired information is, I think, the reason why the magic pebble is sometimes so unsatisfactory to some who test its powers."

"I will try and obey your instruction," responded Virginia, and her brain full of strange excitement, she advanced to the marble pillar.

As Madame Mendoza had said, in the center of the top of the pillar was a small globe of crystal white glass. It was about three inches in diameter, and sunken in the surface of the marble so that it did not project at all above it.

The girl could not perceive that any rays of light came from the crystal globe, other than those which came from the light of the lamp and were reflected upon its surface; but when she removed the light and held it behind her, so that the surface of the marble was in darkness, she perceived that, down in the center of the globe, there seemed to be a faint glow, and as she gazed, fixing her mind with all possible intentness upon the unknown who had rescued her, to her amazement the light seemed to grow stronger, and then, faintly, little by little, a face appeared, mirrored in the magic pebble!

It grew distinct! It was the face of the man who had rescued her that momentous night!

Virginia uttered a cry of amazement, and, as though her voice had broken the spell, both picture and light vanished; the magic pebble was dark again!

CHAPTER XII.

MISS BIRDSEYE ELUCIDATES.

MADAME MENDOZA reconducted Miss Auchinclose to the outer apartment, and signified that she was ready for Miss Du Burg; but the housekeeper had noticed by the expression upon Virginia's face that she was greatly agitated, and, immediately inferred that the young lady would like to return home as soon as possible; so consulted her watch, pretended to be surprised at the lateness of the hour, and said she would defer her own consultation to another time.

Madame Mendoza received her fee and the ladies departed.

After getting into the coach, and, in fact, during all the homeward ride, Virginia was strangely abstracted, and her companions, perceiving the fact, did not attempt to draw her into conversation, so but few words were exchanged between the three while they were on their way to Pine Tree Hall, although both Miss Du Burg and Pauline were "dying with curiosity."

It was evident to them that the interview with the clairvoyant must have been productive of important results to make such an impression upon Virginia.

When they arrived at the mansion it lacked fully an hour to dinner so the two young ladies retired to their rooms to dress.

They occupied adjoining apartments, and

when Kate Scott came to assist her mistress, Virginia told her to lay out her things, also Miss Birdseye's, and then she could retire.

Kate obeyed without a word, although she felt sure that something important had occurred during the trip to the city, and that Miss Auchinclose desired to discuss the matter with her companion while she was dressing, and, naturally, Kate made up her mind it was necessary she should hear the conversation.

As the maid, she occupied a small room adjoining the apartments of her mistress. A closet was in this room, and in the back wall of it, Kate had made a hole which went clear through the partition. This hole or aperture was concealed from the view of any one in Miss Auchinclose's apartment by a painting which hung in front of it.

When piercing this hole, Kate had carefully cut away a small section of the paper, so that by replacing the paper skillfully, gumming it in its place, discovery was impossible, except minute inspection was made.

By this device Kate could overhear any ordinary conversation within the room.

"I told Kate she need not wait because I wanted to talk to you," Virginia said, after the maid departed. "You and I are used to helping each other, and I thought we could manage to dress without assistance for this once."

"Oh, there will not be any trouble about that," Pauline replied, lightly, and they proceeded with their work.

At this point Kate Scott reached her hiding place.

"I suppose you noticed that I was not in the mood for conversation during our homeward ride," Virginia remarked.

"Yes, I saw that something had made a decided impression upon you, and, naturally, I presumed your interview with the clairvoyant had been something out of the ordinary."

Kate Scott "pricked up her ears," for it was the first intimation she had received that her mistress was anxious to pry into the mysteries of the present or future.

"It was, indeed, and the more I reflect upon the matter the more puzzled I become."

"Why, what happened to make such an impression upon you? I am awfully curious, you see, and am just dying to learn the particulars of that interview with Madame Mendoza."

Kate Scott's interest was now intense. She repeated the name "Madame Mendoza" over a half-dozen times to fix it in her memory; at some time in the future it might be necessary to find out something in regard to this clairvoyant.

"Well, you saw that I had no faith in her being able to tell me anything, and that I was a most decided unbeliever when I went with her."

"Yes; but I judge she succeeded in converting you."

"Most certainly she astonished me, and I must admit, unbeliever as I am, that there seems to be something wonderful about the woman. But listen and judge."

Then Virginia related the particulars of her interview with the clairvoyant, to which the unsuspected listener, Kate Scott, paid fully as much attention as the one to whom the story was told.

Pauline remained silent for a few minutes, busily in thought, after her friend had finished.

But it was not the revelation Miss Archinclose had made which gave her food for reflection; no, she was trying to think how she could explain some of the seeming mysteries of the clairvoyant's trade without exciting Virginia's suspicions in regard to the life she herself had led before making the acquaintance of the young heiress.

Thinking the matter over for a moment she determined to go ahead, trusting that Miss Auchinclose, interested in the revelation, would never think of asking how it was that she, a young girl, who ought not to know much of the mysteries and miseries of this great world, should chance to be so well informed.

"Your experience was quite a remarkable one," Pauline said, "and some things about it I don't understand, although I think I know much about clairvoyance. I had an acquaintance, once, who was a true clairvoyant and she explained it all to me."

"Yes, yes, I see!" Virginia exclaimed, too much interested to question, or care, how her friend had procured the information.

"You must understand, in the first place, that there are true clairvoyants and false clairvoyants—both men and women—whom nature has gifted with the power of doing really marvelous things, and others who do not possess any gifts at all, but merely pretend they have them for the purpose of cheating the public."

"I see."

"There is nothing to explain about the humbugs, of course," Pauline went on; "they are frauds and produce their effects by tricks, but in regard to the genuine mediums there is no mistake; they really do astonish people who test their powers, and the joke of the thing is that the clairvoyants themselves don't know it is done."

"Is it possible?"

"Oh, yes; it is a gift, like the gift of music, or anything of that kind, excepting that it is a thousand times more rare, and it is one of those strange things which the wit of man has not yet been able to reduce to an exact science."

"The clairvoyant from whom I gained my information was fully as gifted as any of them, but was honest enough to own to me that he knew but little more about the matter than the people who sought information."

"I have studied the matter as intently as possible ever since I made the discovery that I was gifted in this peculiar way," he said to me, "and thought it wouldn't do for me to proclaim it from the house-tops, for that would be apt to interfere with my business, yet I have come to the conclusion that, when I sink into one of these trances all the powers I have are merely to reproduce the thoughts which are in my questioner's mind."

"I see, I understand; it is in reality mind-reading."

"So he claimed, and it was his honest opinion that that was all there was to clairvoyance. He could tell what the questioner knew, and no more; but, as to predicting the future, or even telling what had occurred at some place so distant that the intelligence had not had time to formulate itself, he declared bluntly it could not be done.

"Of course, there are plenty of people who declare that they know to a certainty that clairvoyance can do much more than this, but then, what humbug either in religion, or science, or anything else, lacked followers?" he said.

"The best proof that clairvoyance can neither read the future, nor even the present, if the point from which the information is to come is a distant one, is found in the fact that clairvoyants are glad, like myself, to dispense their information at a dollar per head, instead of availing themselves of their superior sources of information to literally coin money, as they could do, in the stock market, without the least trouble, for there stocks go up or down according to good or bad reports."

"Yes, there isn't the least doubt of that."

"Of course," he said, "clairvoyants make all sorts of ridiculous claims" and romance writers, following the example of the elder Dumas, make their clairvoyants follow the footsteps of certain parties, and, in their sleep, give an accurate description of all they do. It is very pretty reading, and helps the author out amazingly when trying to write a startling story, but it is all pure fiction and cannot be credited. If such a thing were possible, a clairvoyant, attached to every police headquarters, would soon bring to justice the perpetrators of all mysterious crimes."

"I have no doubt that the person who gave you the information spoke the truth, for it seems to agree with all I have ever heard about the matter," Virginia remarked, reflectively.

"It explains, too, some of the mysterious things connected with my interview with Madame Mendoza."

"Of course, under such conditions, it would be an easy matter for her to be able to tell me my name, and what I was thinking about, but she was not able to tell me who the stranger was, who came so timely to our rescue, because it was impossible for her to get the knowledge from my own mind, I being in ignorance of the fact."

"Yes, that is true enough."

"But, how about this magic pebble, and the picture of the stranger which I saw in the crystal ball?" asked the young heiress.

"Well, Virginia, I must confess that that is something which I can neither explain nor account for," the other replied. "There must be some trick about the matter, for I haven't the least faith that there is anything at all magical or supernatural about this magic pebble, as she terms it."

"Yes, it does not seem as if it were possible to take the image from my mind and reproduce that."

"No, no, decidedly not," Pauline exclaimed. "I never heard even the most extravagant of the clairvoyants set up any such claim as that. Of course the frauds do; they are always ready to vow they can do anything for the sake of getting a few dollars out of a lot of idiots. But, dear, are you really sure you didn't allow your imagination to run away with you a little bit in regard to this picture? Are you quite certain you really did see the picture of the gentleman?"

"Oh, yes; there isn't the least doubt about it. I am certain as I am of my own existence," Miss Auchinclose replied, "that I saw his face there. The picture was an excellent one, too, and represented the gentleman exactly as he appeared when he came to the carriage window."

"Is it not possible that, under the excitement of the moment, you were not deceived by your imagination?" Pauline asked, clinging to this idea.

"Oh, no; that I saw his picture in the crystal I know as well as I know my own existence."

"Well, I give it up, and that is all I can do,

for I can't suggest any explanation, excepting, as I said, that there is some trick about the matter, and I don't see how that can be."

"Neither do I; the mystery is too great for me to solve," and then, happening to glance at the clock, Virginia saw the dinner hour was near at hand, and so the girls hastened their work of dressing.

That night a faithful account of the conversation was given to Joe Phenix by his watchful spy, and the acute detective was almost as much puzzled in regard to the matter as the two girls.

"I must hunt up this Madame Mendoza and see if I can't get an inkling in regard to her little game," Joe Phenix remarked.

CHAPTER XIII.

SETTING A TRAP.

AGAIN we conduct the reader to the house of the clairvoyant.

In the reception-room where Madame Mendoza received her visitors, sat four men.

One of them, the Jew broker, Moses Loenthal, is already known to our readers, but the other three we must describe.

The first was a tall, thin man, dressed entirely in black, and as he had a solemn, smoothly-shaven face, nine out of every ten who happened to see him would have been apt to set him down for a minister, for he decidedly possessed the air of one.

The second was a short, thick-set fellow, with a stolid-looking face, dressed in a common dark business suit, and had the appearance of a small tradesman.

Both of these men came under the description of being "no chickens," for neither of them evidently would see forty again.

The third man was one who appeared to be somewhat younger, although the short black beard which he wore had the effect of making him look older than he was.

He was about the medium size, was nicely dressed, and though his jet-black hair and beard gave him a rather savage appearance, he was, to all outward seeming, a plain, substantial business man.

The party had just taken seats in the room at the time we introduce them to the reader's notice, and in order that the conversation which we are about to detail may be fully understood, we will explain who these men are, for each one in his line stood at the very head.

The tall, thin man, who looked like a clergyman, was one of the most notorious criminals that the Old World had ever sent to the New.

His name was Timothy Enoch, and among his pals he was known as "Nailmaker," because in his early years he had followed that trade; that is, so the rumor said, for it was so long ago since he had worked at any honest trade that none of his criminal companions knew anything about it.

"Nailmaker," as he was generally termed, was about as accomplished a criminal as could be found among all the men who were on the cross, and differed from the most of his associates in being able to turn his hand to half a dozen lines.

As a rule few of the criminal classes are able to do this.

The lines of crimes which the different criminals follow are usually strictly adhered to.

The pickpocket seldom does anything but pick pockets; the burglar usually confines himself to "cracking cribs;" the confidence-man makes his living by imposing upon the credulity of mankind; the sneak-thief, the forger, the bank-robber, and in fact all the men who prefer to gain a living by the devious ways of crime, stick as faithfully, as a general rule, to their own particular branch as the shoemaker to his bench, or the painter to his brushes.

But Nailmaker was an "all-round man."

He could "crack a crib" as well as the most expert burglar that ever handled a "jimmy;" could "raise" a check from ten dollars to a thousand as expertly as any forger in existence; could play the confidence game and wheedle a "sucker"—to use the vernacular—out of his money equal to the best in that line.

His exploits had made the Old World too hot to hold him, for there was hardly a country where he had not defied the laws, and now he had come to America to seek fresh fields and pastures new.

The short, stout, thick-set man was another of the same sort.

His name was Patrick O'Glin, and yet he had been born and brought up in France.

He was of Irish descent, of course, as his name fully proved; his father was a noted criminal who had fled to France to escape the police, but he became engaged in fresh difficulties there, and finally had been shot in attempting to resist arrest.

Young Patrick had followed in the footsteps of his father as soon as he became old enough, and as years passed away, came to be regarded as being as great a rascal as could be found in all France.

Thanks to the associates among whom the chance of fortune threw him, he spoke three

languages fluently. English, French and German, and could easily pass himself off as belonging to either of the three nations.

He was wonderfully skillful at disguising himself too, and, being up to all sorts of cunning tricks, had acquired among his "pals" the appellation of Old Monkey, by which he was generally known.

He and Nailmaker had been pals for a number of years, and, like his companion, had been forced to cross the seas on account of the persistent pursuit of the police.

The third man, the black-haired, black-bearded fellow, was not a regular working "professional" like the other two.

He was the man who planned the jobs—the man who discovered where rich booty was to be got, and then arranged a scheme by means of which his confederates could get at it.

He was the "head," the others the "hands," or he might be likened to the general of an army who planned the campaign, while the others were the soldiers who did the fighting.

An old associate of Nailmaker and Old Monkey was this man, and among his pals he was known as Captain Rats.

The police of every important European city could have told something of this party, although few of them could boast that they had ever succeeded in getting their clutches upon him, for, like the animal whose name he bore, he was sly and cunning, and it was no easy matter to catch him in a trap.

And now, having introduced our characters, we will allow them to speak for themselves.

"It seems to me dot der game is going on pretty well," Loenthal remarked.

"Oh, yes, there isn't the least doubt about that," Captain Rats answered.

"The onlything about the matter that I don't like," Nailmaker observed in his serious way, "is the fact that these two spies are domiciled in the house."

Old Monkey shook his head knowingly, as if he agreed with the speaker.

Captain Rats noticed this and said:

"You are a little worried about that too, Old Monkey?"

"Yes, I don't like it."

"And I have also been looking into the matter," Nailmaker hastened to say.

"You know, being all strangers here, we are not as well posted in regard to certain things as we might be."

"You mean in the detective line?" Captain Rats remarked.

"Yes."

"What did you discover?"

"Why, that this man Phenix is one of the most experienced detectives in the country."

"I imagined as much from the way he went to work," the captain observed, seemingly not at all disturbed by the intelligence.

"He used to be attached to the regular detective force, and was counted to be the best man in his line in the country," Nailmaker continued.

"A regular bloodhound, eh?" Old Monkey remarked.

"That is the reputation he has, and they say that it was not often he went after a man that he did not get him."

"Quite a dangerous fellow!" Captain Rats observed, in an extremely jocular manner, just as if he was not disposed to pay much attention to the affair.

All three of the others shook their heads, and Loenthal, feeling that he ought to say something, remarked:

"Oh, I tell you vat it ish, captain, you must not go for to make much foolishness mid dis Phenix! I hafe heard of him many times, and he is dot kind of man dot makes much troubles."

"Yes, yes, I understand all about that, and, my dear fellows, don't fall into the error of thinking that I underestimate the man, for I do not!" Captain Rats exclaimed.

"I want you to understand that I am not the kind of man to be caught napping."

"The moment I discovered that this Joe Phenix was going to take a hand in the game, I set out to learn his history, and it did not take me long to discover just what kind of a man he is; but, in regard to the woman, Kate Scott, nobody seems to know anything about her."

"She is one of his spies, though; there isn't any doubt about that," Nailmaker asserted, emphatically.

"No doubt," Captain Rats assented, "and there is no doubt, too, that, as long as the pair are in the house, they are likely at any time to upset all our schemes."

"Yes, but how are we going to get rid of them?" asked Old Monkey, shaking his head as though he considered that he had asked a puzzling question.

"The trap is already laid," Captain Rats replied. "And, in my opinion, it will only be a question of time before one, if not both, of the parties we fear will walk into it."

The rest looked astonished at this intelligence.

"Ah, pals, you must not think I have been asleep!" the captain exclaimed.

"We are playing for a big stake, and I

don't intend to lose a single trick if I can help it!

"Now then, I have reasoned that the story of Miss Auchinclose's interview with Madame Mendoza will become known to Kate Scott, then she will reveal it to Joe Phenix, and, as a natural consequence, one of them will come here for the purpose of seeing what little game the clairvoyant is up to."

"Yes, yes," Nailmaker exclaimed, "that is the step which undoubtedly will be taken."

"You see, I have come the old game of the Parisian police.

"At present this house is a rat-trap. It will be an extremely easy matter for our prey to gain admission, but once in, they will be caught as safely as a rat in a cage."

Just then the door-bell rung.

"Quick! your disguise. Old Monkey!" Captain Rats cried. "It may be one of our birds!"

The surmise was right; Kate Scott was at the door.

CHAPTER XIV. A DESPERATE ATTEMPT.

OLD MONKEY immediately proceeded to put on his white wig and beard, for it was he who had attended to the door when the three ladies made their call upon Madame Mendoza.

"Now, then, if it is either the girl or Joe Phenix pretend to be a little deaf and detain them at the door for a few moments, then show them into the inner apartment, where we will be in readiness to receive the party."

"If it is a stranger, say that Madame Mendoza is out, ask them to call again, and close the door as soon as possible."

"All right."

Old Monkey departed and the others gathered by the half-open door, so as to be able to ascertain who it was that had applied for admission.

"Of course the chances are against its being either the girl or the detective," Captain Rats remarked, "for it is rather too soon for them to commence an investigation into the affair; still they may go on the idea that the quicker they get at it the better, as these clairvoyants are uncertain people and apt to skip at a moment's warning."

"It is their game to look into the matter as soon as possible," Nailmaker remarked.

"Yes, under like circumstances you and I would be apt to go to work in that way," the captain assented.

"You can bet high on that!"

The opening of the front door at this point put an end to the conversation.

The watchers listened intently.

A female voice asked:

"Is Madame Mendoza in?"

A glance of exultation appeared upon the face of Nailmaker, for he had recognized the voice.

"It is the woman, captain!" he whispered in the ear of the chief.

"Kate Scott?"

"Yes."

"You recognized her voice beyond a doubt?"

"Oh, yes."

"Come, then; we must prepare to receive her."

Closing the door, noiselessly, the three passed through the first apartment into the second, where the interview between the clairvoyant and Miss Auchinclose had taken place.

Leaving these men to their dark and devious devices, we will turn our attention to Joe Phenix's "decoy duck."

Old Monkey appeared so venerable and so harmless in his disguise that even Kate Scott, with all her shrewdness, did not suspect that there was anything wrong about him.

The girl was dressed neatly and plainly, as became one in her supposed station, and she put the question in regard to the clairvoyant in the most natural manner.

Had not Old Monkey known that the girl was a police spy he would never have suspected it, for she played the part of a raw, innocent serving maid to the life.

Old Monkey pretended to be a little hard of hearing, according to instructions.

"Hey?" he said.

"Is Madame Mendoza, the clairvoyant, in?"

Kate Scott asked, raising her voice a little.

"Oh, yes," Old Monkey replied, affecting to understand the inquiry now.

"Do you want to see her?"

"Yes, if you please."

"Want to consult her?"

"Yes, sir."

"She charges a dollar a visit."

"I am willing to pay it," and Kate produced her pocketbook, from which she took a dollar.

"Oh, you don't have to pay me; it is Madame Mendoza who takes the money."

And then, thinking he had detained the girl long enough to have enabled his confederates to get ready to receive her, he said:

"If you will have the kindness to follow me I will conduct you to the madame."

"Yes, sir."

Kate entered the entry, Old Monkey closed the door and then led the way through the pass-

age into the reception-room. Passing through this he conducted the girl through the narrow entry into the mystic chamber, where the clairvoyant was accustomed to give audience to those who sought to peep into the mysteries of the future.

The room was dimly illuminated by the small brass lamp, just as Mrs. Auchinclose had described.

Kate looked around her with eager curiosity, and immediately noted that the clairvoyant was not present.

"Madame Mendoza will be here in a moment," Old Monkey said, noticing the inquiring look of the girl.

The female spy had no opportunity to ask any questions, for Captain Rats had stolen into the room through the dark passage with a heavy blanket in his hands, and, being directly in the rear of the girl had no difficulty in throwing it over her head, and he did it in so dexterous a manner that she was covered by the folds of the blanket from the head to the waist.

And the moment this trick was performed, Nailmaker was ready with a small, but strong rope, with a slip-noose arranged in one end, which he threw over the girl's head, allowed it to fall to her middle and then drew it tight, thus securing her arms.

The female spy, understanding immediately that she had been entrapped, screamed with all her might, but the heavy folds of the blanket deadened her cries, and the two men, seizing her in their strong arms, carried her by a narrow, concealed passage down into a sub-cell, which was located under the regular underground apartment.

Kate Scott struggled and resisted with all her might, but although a strong and wiry young woman, she was like a child in the grasp of her captors.

"Light a glim!" was Captain Rats's command after the girl was safely in the cellar, and had been flung into one of the corners with scant ceremony.

From one of the cellar-beams a lantern hung, and this Nailmaker proceeded to light.

By the time that the rays of the lantern began to illuminate the apartment Kate Scott had struggled to her feet, but that was all she was able to accomplish, for she was bound too skillfully to remove her bonds.

"She's a fighter, eh?" Captain Rats remarked.

"Yes, a regular tiger-cat!"

Both of the men had covered their faces with black masks so as to avoid being recognized.

"You had better search her for weapons," the captain remarked, "for it is more than likely that she has got a barker or two concealed somewhere about her."

"I've got a pair of handcuffs to slip on so that she will not be able to use a pistol if she has one," Nailmaker remarked.

Then he drew from his pocket a pair of the new pattern, patent handcuffs, which are far superior to the old style, and approaching the girl, who was vainly striving to free herself from the cords which bound her, said, in a threatening tone:

"Now, then, stop your foolishness or it will be the worse for you!"

"I am going to slip a pair of handcuffs on you and take the rope off, and the blanket, too, but if you are going to be ugly about the matter, I'll have to try some games which will be apt to be mighty disagreeable to you."

The female spy ceased to struggle, for she understood that there wasn't anything to be gained by attempting to resist her captors.

Nailmaker snapped the handcuffs on her wrists, then removed the rope and the blanket, and as he busied himself in these proceedings, he slyly slipped his hand into the pockets of the short coat she wore, and in one of them, as he expected, he discovered a small revolver, which he immediately removed.

And this trick was performed so neatly that the girl had not the slightest suspicion that she had been disarmed.

When the blanket was removed, Kate looked around her in astonishment, and, extending her hands pleadingly toward her captors, cried:

"Oh, gentlemen, don't kill me, and I will give you all I've got."

It was her idea to make her assailants believe that she had no suspicions in regard to what they really were, but innocently took them to be a pair of robbers.

In reality the female spy understood the situation exactly.

She had fallen into a trap; in seeking the house of the clairvoyant with the idea of discovering if there was anything "crooked" about the woman, she had fallen into the hands of some of the gang upon whose track Joe Phenix was pressing.

Now she had proof positive that there was an organized band of rascals, some of whom had contrived to get into the Auchinclose mansion with the idea of playing a dark and dangerous game.

Just exactly what the game was could not be determined at present.

That the disguise of both herself and Phenix

had been penetrated was evident, but what the rascals hoped to gain by this attack upon her was a mystery.

One thing, though, she had determined upon, and that was if her captors endeavored to gain any information from her in regard to the plans of the detective, she would vow she knew nothing at all about either them or him.

And on their part, not having any idea that either Joe Phenix or his female decoy were anywhere near or hot on the trail, as they really were, the conspirators did not intend to allow Kate Scott to suspect they had any suspicion that they were being watched, or that they knew that she and her master, disguised, were inmates of Pine Tree Hall.

It was their game to make her believe they were merely common ruffians who had assaulted her for the purpose of procuring a ransom.

"We will take all you've got, young lady," responded Captain Rats, in a hoarse, disguised voice.

"And then we calculate to keep you here, too, until your friends make up their minds to come down handsomely for your release."

For a moment the female spy was perplexed; was there some mistake about the matter?

Was her surmise wrong, and had she fallen into the hands of a different gang from what she supposed?

"Oh, I haven't any friends who would be willing, or able, to pay anything for me. I'm only a poor girl. My name is Kate Scott."

"Then you are not Miss Auchinclose, the rich heiress?" said Captain Rats, in a tone which seemed to signify that he believed she was that young lady.

"Indeed I am not!"

"Perhaps we have made a mistake, but we don't think we have. You must stay here until we find out. Don't try to escape, for all efforts in that line will be useless."

"Behave yourself, and you will be well treated."

And with this assurance the pair departed.

Kate was bewildered.

Was it a mistake? She could not believe that it was possible!

She was not much worried over her captivity, though, for she had firm faith that Joe Phenix would soon come to her rescue.

CHAPTER XV. THE STRANGER.

JUDGE COLAMORE sat in his office in not a pleasant humor.

The old lawyer occupied apartments in one of the prominent down-town buildings devoted to the accommodation of such business gentlemen as himself.

Nearly six weeks had passed since he had employed the detective, and although Joe Phenix, speaking in his cautious way, had said that there was hardly any doubt in his mind that there had been foul play connected with the death of Campbell Auchinclose, yet he had not been able to get on the track of the guilty party or parties.

"But you have made some little progress, I suppose?" was the judge's natural query.

"Well, I can't say that I have done much," the detective replied.

"It is going to be a still hunt and a long one. As yet I haven't found out much—in fact, to come right down to bare facts, I haven't found out anything; all I have to go on is a sort of instinct. I am certain there is something wrong, and I think, in time, I can get at it, but it is going to be a difficult matter."

This was not particularly encouraging, but the judge knew that Phenix was a reliable man, and that if he did not think he could make something of the case would not be apt to keep on with it.

He was not one of the Cheap John detectives who hang on to an affair as long as they can make a dollar out of it, even when they know there is not the slightest chance of their succeeding.

On this particular morning the old lawyer had been reflecting over the matter, and the thought that some unknown villains were able to baffle one of the shrewdest detectives in the country annoyed him terribly.

He was in this frame of mind when there came into his office a representative of one of the oldest and wealthiest families in New York.

Barry Livingstone the young gentleman was called, and he was one of the most prominent young men about town in the city.

By the death of his father he had inherited a large estate, and the judge had had the management of his affairs for years.

Livingstone was a pretty fast young man, and if he had not had a princely income, would undoubtedly have gone to the dogs long ago.

But when a man has the handling of fifty thousand dollars in clear cash, a year, he must live in a frightfully extravagant manner to be able to get rid of it.

Young Livingstone was one of the gentlemen who prided themselves upon being in the "swim."

He was extremely "English, you know," after the prevailing fashion.

"How-to-do, judge?" the young man remarked, in his languid way, as he made his appearance in the office and helped himself to a chair.

According to the prevailing custom he carried a cane big enough to serve as a bludgeon, and amused himself during the intervals of the conversation by sucking it.

"Well, Mr. Livingstone, how do you find yourself this morning?" Judge Colamore asked.

"Pretty well—yes, I think I'm pretty well. Feel rather played out, though; was up with the boys late last night. We had no end of a racket, you know."

"Went to the opera, then did all the clubs and drank wine enough to float a ship—yas! If I hadn't an awful strong head I should be laid up this morning."

The judge immediately took it upon himself to express his disapprobation of such proceedings.

"What on earth is a fellah to do? Must have a little racket once in awhile to keep a man's blood stirring, you know."

"Well, what are you after this morning? Are you cleaned out already and want more cash?" asked the old lawyer, abruptly.

A want of this kind was about the only thing that ever procured him the pleasure of a visit from the young gentleman.

"Oh, no, I've been a very good boy. I haven't got rid of all my cash yet."

"Well, that is really astonishing! You must be getting prudent."

"Yas, can't keep up the pace all the time, you know. But, I say, judge, I've come to see you on behalf of a friend of mine."

"Yes?"

"No end of a swell, you know, the Marquis of Morel."

"Hallo! a lord?"

"Yas, a deuced nice fellow. I met him last year when I made the grand tour; you remember when I was over in Europe?"

"Oh, yes, I am not likely to forget it, for you kept me pretty busy supplying your demands for money."

"Yas, did get rid of a deuced lot of cash, didn't I?" and the young gentleman chuckled as though he considered this an extremely meritorious thing to do.

"You most decidedly did."

"Well, I met the marquis first at Paris, then ran across him in London, and afterward at Monaco; that is where they do the gambling, you know."

"Yes, so I have read."

"Beautiful place! and you can get rid of more money there than any town I ever struck."

"If I remember rightly, you got rid of eight or ten thousand dollars there."

"Oh, yas, I lost money like smoke! It was deuced exciting, though, and the first thing I knew I was completely cleaned out. Didn't have a sou left, as they say out there, and for awhile I was really puzzled, for it would take a day or two to get some cash, but this marquis got a kind of an idea you know, that I was busteed, and in the kindest manner in the world he offered to be my banker until my funds arrived."

"Well, that was accommodating."

"Oh, yes, a deuced nice fellow. Of course I accepted the offer in the same spirit in which it was made."

"You see, judge, the marquis is one of those lucky dogs. He was the one man out of the hundred who was lucky enough to win at the tables."

"But then, as he said, he had made a study of the affair, and played on a system which he had worked out, and then, too, as he was not in need of money and played merely because it was the fashion to play—to pass away the time, you know, luck favored him, for as he very justly remarked, luck generally favors the man who doesn't need the assistance."

"To him that hath shall be given," quoted the judge.

"Yas, a good deal of truth in that too, I think," the young man observed with a wise shake of the head.

"Well, the marquis has come to New York, and he has taken such a fancy to this place that he thinks of settling in this country."

"Well, that's rather odd," the old lawyer commented.

"Young and wealthy foreigners of his stamp are not generally enraptured with America."

"Well, he is an odd fish, anyway, and then he has friends out West who have invested pretty heavily."

"You have heard of this cattle-king marquis?"

"Yes."

"He and Morel used to be chums, I believe; and Morel has an idea of going into something of that kind. He speaks English just as fluently as I do; you see, his mother was an English woman."

"By the way, he don't call himself a marquis over here. He drops his title and just calls himself Andrea Morel."

"There isn't the least bit of airs about him, you know. He's just as nice a fellow as you ever saw."

"Then he doesn't want to dazzle us plain republicans with his title!"

"Oh, no, he's a jolly good fellow, and I thought, my dear judge, that as he was thinking of going into real estate pretty heavily near New York, he ought to have some man like you to look after his interests."

"Yes, it would be advisable."

"I drove him in my trap the other day out past your place—the Auchinclose place, you know, and he admired the location very much, and said he would like to get a country seat in the neighborhood. He has the English idea, you know. Thinks every gentleman ought to have a country place."

"Why, the very next estate to the Auchinclose place is for sale, and it can be bought cheap too," the judge remarked.

"Yas, come to think of it, we noticed that it was closed up as we drove by. A large white house, isn't it?"

"Yes, that is the one, the De Jones place. It cost old De Jones fully fifty thousand dollars, and I feel pretty certain that thirty thousand will buy it."

"The old gentleman is dead, you know, and his heirs are all out West, and they would like to get the place off their hands. And, if it would be any inducement to your friend, about all the money can remain on mortgage; three or four thousand in cash would be all that would be required."

"Well, it looks to me as if it would be a deuced good speculation," Livingstone remarked with an air of grave reflection.

"And you always know, too, what you are talking about, and if you think there is money in it the marquis will be safe in investing."

"Oh, it is a good speculation; there isn't any doubt about that."

"Yes; well, I am going to lunch with Morel at Delmonico's, and after lunch I will bring him in to see you."

"All right; I shall be glad to meet him."

Livingstone then took his departure, but in a couple of hours returned, bringing with him a gentleman whom he introduced as Mr. Andrea Morel.

The judge was favorably impressed with the new-comer.

He was a man of thirty-five, or thereabout, of medium height, well-built figure and pleasing countenance.

His face had a foreign look, for the complexion was dark, his hair, mustache and pointed chin-beard jet-black in hue.

In both appearance and behavior he was a polished, courtly gentleman, and after the old judge had been five minutes in his company he no longer wondered why the "marquis" had made such an impression upon Barry Livingstone, who, as a rule, was too thoroughly wrapped up in himself to allow anybody to produce much of an impression upon him.

The De Jones place was discussed, and the stranger expressed himself pleased with the idea, and an appointment to visit and examine the property was made for the following day.

Naturally, when the old lawyer went home to dinner that day he spoke of the stranger and his project, and Miss Auchinclose and her friend, and the housekeeper, as well, took a lively interest in the subject, for as Miss Du Burg remarked:

"A real, live marquis is not to be encountered every day."

The young men came prompt to appointment; the house and grounds were examined, the marquis expressed himself as being satisfied with it, and deputed the judge to look into the title and then close the bargain.

Under the circumstances it was the most natural thing in the world for the judge to invite the two gentlemen to dine with him, and so the marquis made the acquaintance of the ladies of Pine Tree Hall.

Judge of the astonishment of Virginia and Pauline when in the gentleman they recognized the stranger who had come so timely to their rescue when beset by the tramps.

But as the marquis made no sign of recognition when introduced, the two girls came to the conclusion that he did not remember them, which was not strange under the circumstances.

CHAPTER XVI.

PHENIX TAKES UP THE SCENT.

THE detective was of course acquainted with Kate Scott's purpose of visiting the clairvoyant, for he had himself suggested it.

He was not particularly sanguine that much good would result from the enterprise, but thought it would be worth trying.

It was arranged between the two that when Kate came from the clairvoyant's she was to walk up Broadway past a certain hotel.

The lounging-room of this house had windows directly on the street, and Joe Phenix took a seat near one of these casements, so he could command a view of every one who passed.

The detective had removed his disguise and now appeared in his own proper person.

The Man of Three.

It was about eight o'clock in the evening when Kate rung the bell of the clairvoyant's abode, and the detective had calculated her visit would not occupy over an hour at the outside.

So, when nine o'clock came and Kate Scott did not make her appearance, Joe Phenix began to feel anxious.

He waited another hour, but when the hands of the clock pointed to ten he resolved to wait no longer.

Something was wrong; he was sure of it.

Kate had evidently fallen into some kind of a trap, or else she would have been on time.

The first thing that Phenix did was to walk through the street, where the clairvoyant's house was situated, for the purpose of taking a look at the premises, and in making this inspection he was careful to keep on the opposite side of the street, sauntering along in such a manner as not to excite suspicion.

All was dark about the house—not a sign of life.

The detective mused over the situation.

"Now, then, if by going into the house Kate has fallen into a trap, the rascals who are engineering the game may think that a gentleman about my size, being anxious about her, will be fool enough to try the same move."

And Joe Phenix smiled grimly to himself, as much as to say that he was too old a bird to be caught in any such trap.

"No, no, smart as I am, I am not smart enough to cope with two or three desperate men if assaulted in a dark entry with the door closed behind me.

"If it is to come to a hand-to-hand struggle I don't intend to start in with all the advantages on the other side.

"No doubt the scoundrels were all prepared for Kate's visit, having anticipated that I would inquire into this clairvoyant business, and as they have succeeded in entrapping Kate, the odds are a thousand to one they would be able to get away with me if I was fool enough to venture inside of the door.

"There is no better nor easier way to throw the bloodhound from the track than to kill the dog. That most certainly puts a stop to the pursuit.

"That is their game, evidently, and now I must try one of my own."

Having come to this conclusion Joe Phenix hurried at once to Police Headquarters.

As luck would have it he found the superintendent closeted with a couple of the best of the city detectives.

The three had been planning a campaign, but when Joe Phenix sent word that he would like to see the superintendent upon important business he was at once admitted.

The superintendent had a high respect for Joe Phenix, and was always glad to see and aid him to the extent of his power.

"Well, what are you driving at now?" the chief questioned, after the customary greetings were over.

"I am working up a little private matter, and I think I will have to call on you for some assistance," the detective answered.

"All right. I will do anything for you that I can."

"I am afraid that one of my spotters has got into trouble," and then Joe Phenix related how he had sent Kate Scott to the house of the clairvoyant, and said he feared she had fallen into some trap there, as she had not made her appearance according to agreement.

"To Madame Mendoza's did you say?" asked Detective Price, who was one of the men closeted with the superintendent; Detective Ryan was the other.

"Yes."

"I know the old lady, and she's square, I think; I never knew of her being mixed up in any crooked business; but your spotter didn't see the madame to-night."

"She entered the house, for I watched her until the door closed behind her," Joe Phenix replied.

"She was admitted by an old man with white hair and white beard."

"Madame Mendoza never had any men hanging around the house," Detective Price exclaimed positively.

"I am certain of that, for I have been in the house two or three times, and she and another old woman were all that were in the place."

"I am quite sure about the old man, for I saw him," Joe Phenix remarked.

"Oh, yes, I haven't the least doubt about that, but the old man didn't belong to Madame Mendoza's gang, and the reason why I am so positive that your spotter didn't see Madame Mendoza to-night, is because the old lady sailed for England this afternoon," Detective Price observed.

"I had some business which took me down on board of the steamer just before she hauled out into the stream."

"Seeing the madame on board, I asked her if she was going to quit us for good, and she said she was, for she could do better in England than in the States."

"It is as I suspected, then," Joe Phenix de-

clared. "The madame's house is now in possession of a gang, who have used the madame as a tool for a certain purpose, and that is the reason why she has got out."

"If Madame Mendoza remained here they were afraid some inquiry would be made into the matter, and so the madame departed."

"My spotter went there to see the madame, and has fallen into a trap."

"Oh, well, we must get her out," the superintendent remarked.

"And I would like to take measures so as to capture all of the gang who may be in the house," Joe Phenix observed.

"Of course that will be our little game."

"Let me see," remarked the superintendent, reflectively. "I suppose we ought to have a warrant. It is always better to proceed so that no sharp lawyer will be able to trip up our heels when we come to court."

"Judge Duffy was talking with a party in the Metropolitan Hotel when I came in," Detective Ryan remarked.

"The chances are good that he is there now," said the superintendent.

"My carriage is at the door; jump into it, Ryan, and go after the judge. Tell him that he will oblige me if he will come here for about five minutes so we can swear out a warrant."

The detective hurried away to execute the mission.

"Now, then, let me see; how shall I word this warrant?" the chief asked.

"Assault and abduction," Joe Phenix replied.

"Well, that certainly is comprehensive enough; and the parties?"

"You have got me there, superintendent," Joe Phenix replied, with a shake of the head.

"I haven't the least idea as to who the parties are, although I have got on their track, but the whole affair is as mysterious a one as I ever had anything to do with."

"We will have to fall back on the old legal fiction then of John Doe and Richard Roe."

"Yes, that will do."

"Price, you are handy with the pen, make out the paper."

The detective immediately complied, and by the time it was drawn up the judge came in, escorted by the other detective.

The matter being explained to him, he issued the warrant.

"Now, I suppose, Joe, that with Price and Ryan you can do the job?" the chief said.

"Yes, I think we three will be able to handle the matter, unless there is a small army entrenched in the building," Phenix replied.

"And even then I reckon you three would be apt to make it pretty lively for them."

"Well, we would try our best," responded Joe Phenix, tersely, and the others nodded their heads and smiled, grimly.

Three better men to execute a job of this kind could not have been selected from all the detectives of the world.

"I guess we had better have a carriage," Phenix suggested, after they had got down to the pavement.

There was a hack up the street, the driver of which was well known to the officers, who had often employed him in similar jobs, and he was engaged.

Getting into the coach the detectives were driven to the corner of the street on which Madame Mendoza's house was situated.

The hack was directed not to proceed to the house for fear of awakening suspicion.

The detectives realized that they had wary game to deal with, and they did not wish to alarm the prey.

It was arranged that Joe Phenix was to apply for admission, the other two keeping in the background.

And then, when the door opened, Joe Phenix would place his foot on the sill in such a manner as to prevent the door from being closed, and the other detectives would advance.

So, while Joe Phenix ascended the steps the others skulked in the shadow.

Phenix rung the bell—waited for a few moments, and then, as no one came, he rung again.

Again and again he rung, and with the same result.

Either the house was deserted, or the rascals within it were on the watch and had detected the skulking officers.

After some ten minutes of fruitless exertion Joe Phenix descended to the sidewalk and held a consultation with the others.

"What do you think?" he asked.

"They have had a spy on the lookout, and he has smoked our game," Price remarked.

"The house looks deserted, though," Ryan observed.

"I reckon the game is there fast enough," the other replied. "It is as I tell you; we have been spotted. We were not as sly about the trick as we might have been."

And then a sudden thought occurred to the detective.

"I say, I've got a whole set of skeleton-keys in my pocket that I took from a sneak-thief this afternoon. We might try and see if one of them would fit the door."

"That is a capital idea!" Joe Phenix exclaimed.

The keys were tried—one of them fitted to perfection; it shoved back the bolt of the lock with perfect ease, but the door did not open.

"It is bolted on the inside," Joe Phenix remarked in a tone of conviction.

"And that shows that our birds are at home," Ryan exclaimed.

"We must get at them in some way," Price cried.

"I have it," said Joe Phenix. "We will apply to the house next door; explain our errand, and ask permission to get from their yard into the yard of this ranch; in that way we can crack our crib."

"Good!" cried the others in a breath.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE RESCUE.

"AND now the question is, which house of the two shall we try?" Phenix remarked, glancing with a searching eye upon the buildings, which adjoined the residence of the clairvoyant.

"There don't seem to be any choice," Detective Price observed.

"As far as can be seen neither one show any signs of life."

And this was true enough, for the houses adjoining the one occupied by the clairvoyant were dark.

"Oh, let us try this right-hand one," Detective Ryan exclaimed. "It doesn't make much difference, anyway. But, I say, if our birds are in this ranch, while we are getting in at the back way what is to prevent them from getting out of the front door?"

"Nothing at all, unless one of us remains here so as to put a stop to any little game of that sort," Joe Phenix remarked.

"It wouldn't be a bad idea for Ryan to stay here, and then we would have the game in a trap," Detective Price observed.

"Yes, if they haven't given leg bail already," said Phenix, who had got the idea into his head that the expedition was not going to be as successful as he had hoped.

It would have puzzled him to tell how the idea came to him, for when he had started on the quest he felt pretty certain he would be able to catch the rascals napping.

"All right, I'll remain here then, and nab anybody who comes out of the house," Detective Ryan remarked.

The other two ascended the steps of the house on the right hand, and Joe Phenix pulled the bell.

In answer to the summons an old Irishwoman came to the door.

"Do you know anything about the people in the next house?" Joe Phenix asked.

"Is it the fortune-teller yez m'an?"

"Yes."

"Sorra a wan of me knows."

"Well, we are officers of the law, and want to get into the house, but as the front door is locked, we would prefer not to break it in, if we can help it, and we thought by going through your yard we could get in at the back door."

"Mebbe yez might," but the woman blocked the way with her portly figure and showed no sign of allowing the officers to get by her.

"Well, madam, if you will have the kindness to allow us to pass through," Joe Phenix remarked.

"Yez are shure yez are perlicemen?" the woman asked, in a doubtful sort of way.

For answer Detective Price opened his coat and displayed his official badge which was pinned upon the inside.

This partly satisfied the old woman, although she didn't understand why the two men were not in uniform, if they were policemen, and said as much.

"We are not regular policemen, madam, we are detective officers," Joe Phenix explained.

"Men, madame, whose business it is to arrest murderers and all such dangerous criminals." And in order to give due effect to his words, the man-hunter drew from his pocket a pair of handcuffs and held them up before the eyes of the servant.

There was a small lamp dimly illuminating the hall, so the woman had no difficulty in perceiving the "bracelets."

"Lord save us! ain't tbim awful things!" she ejaculated. "Go in, gentlemin, go in wid ye, and welkim."

And as the woman got out of the way the detectives lost no time in making their way to the yard in the rear of the building.

It was an easy job for the pair to scale the low fence which separated the two yards, and then they found themselves at the back door of the clairvoyant's house.

As they climbed over the fence they glanced upward at the house and saw that it was just as dark in the back as in the front.

"I am afraid we have wasted too much time," Joe Phenix remarked, with a shake of the head.

"The birds are wary ones, and I fear they have taken the alarm and vamoosed the ranch."

"The door being fastened upon the insi-

would seem to say that there was somebody in the house," the other detective observed.

"Yes, I think there *was* when we came up, but this woman has made us waste so much time—and every minute counts when dealing with such high-tobacco chaps as these birds we are after—that I fear they have been able to give us the slip."

"Ryan is on the watch, though, at the front door."

"Yes, but we didn't think of the scuttle in the roof," Joe Phenix replied.

"These are all flat-roofed houses, and it would be the easiest thing in the world for our game to get out by way of the scuttle and pass from roof to roof."

"Very true, but they must have some house near where they are known, so as to be able to descend to the street," Detective Price observed.

"Well, that would not be a difficult matter to arrange."

"That's so."

The detective tried the door and the windows. All were fastened, but it was evident that the fastening of the door was not a stout one, and Phenix, noticing this, said:

"It wouldn't be a difficult matter to force this door open."

"So I was thinking; it is a bolt, I believe, and I've got a small 'jimmy' in my pocket. I don't know as this sort of thing is strictly legal—being a kind of breaking and entering, but it is necessary, so here goes!"

The detective produced the powerful little cracksman's tool to which he referred, and applying it with true professional skill, forced the door open with very little trouble.

"Have you your bull's-eye in your pocket?" Joe Phenix asked.

"Oh, yes, I never travel without my tools, for there's no telling when a man in our line will want them."

The detective took his bull's eye lantern out of his pocket, lit it, and then drew his revolver, ready for action; Phenix did the same.

Both of the detectives were armed with double-acting, self-cocking pistols, and so were fully prepared for war.

Into the house they advanced, the gleam of the bull's-eye lighting the way.

The house was one of the old-fashioned sort, without a basement, and with an entry running clear through it.

The first room which the pair entered was the one in the rear of the building, which was used as a kitchen.

From this, they proceeded into the next apartment, which was the reception-room where the clairvoyant had been accustomed to receiving her visitors.

There was a lamp burning on the table, and the detective took this as a sign that the room had been occupied when they had endeavored to gain admission.

Continuing their search the pair passed into the front room, where the little brass lamp still burnt upon the marble pillar.

Remembering the tale of the magic pebble, Joe Phenix searched for it, but it had been removed.

The marble pillar was a humbug, being composed of wood, and hollow, and the detective saw at once how easy it had been to fix a photograph so that it would appear to be in the center of the crystal globe.

From this room they turned their attention to the upper part of the house.

The rooms were plainly furnished, but not a soul did they see, nor any evidence that any one had lately been in the house, until they came to the scuttle, and this they found was unfastened.

Of course this might be just the result of accident, but the detectives thought otherwise.

To their minds it was plain proof that the house had been occupied by the game they sought when they arrived, and that their errand being discovered, the rascals had made their escape by way of the roof, through the scuttle.

"But my little decoy duck, my bonny Kate!" Joe Phenix exclaimed.

"What on earth has become of her? They couldn't have carried her off by the way of the roof, and there isn't the least doubt that the scoundrels captured her."

"The most likely place to find her would be in the cellar," Detective Price observed.

"We haven't examined that yet you know."

"Very true."

Down they went into the cellar, and as they descended the stairway, which was narrow and badly built, after the usual fashion, Joe Phenix kept a close watch to see if there were any projecting nails, for if there were, and Kate was rudely forced down the stairway, some of the fuzz from her coat would be apt to be left behind.

Kate Scott wore one of the reddish-brown fuzzy coats so commonly used by girls who are not able to afford an expensive outer garment.

Sure enough there were projecting nails, and some of them had torn bits from the girl's coat, as she had been evidently forced down the stairway.

"We are on the right track," Joe Phenix exclaimed as he called Detective Price's attention to the bits of wool.

"Yes, yes; no mistake about that."

But both of the detectives were astonished and considerably disappointed when they reached the bottom of the stairway, from whence they could command a view of the cellar, and discovered that it was empty.

"By Jove! we are beaten again!" Price exclaimed.

But Joe Phenix's keen eyes detected a hairpin upon the floor, and a search resulted in finding another and another, and this conducted the pair to where the secret stairway led down into the sub-cellars.

If ever there was a delighted girl in this world, it was Kate Scott when the two men came to her rescue.

"Well, Kate, they had you in a pretty tight place," Joe Phenix exclaimed, as he beheld the manacles upon her wrists.

"Yes; but I didn't despair, for I had faith that you would come to my assistance."

"Well, I generally move heaven and earth to help a pal," the other replied.

Detective Price had been taking a look at the "ornaments" upon Kate's wrists.

"I reckon I have a key that will take those beauties off," he remarked.

He was correct in this supposition, and Kate was soon relieved of the handcuffs.

"How did they trap you?" Joe Phenix asked.

Kate related all that had occurred, and both of the detectives shook their heads at the tale, for they comprehended that she had been in the power of desperate and determined men.

The three proceeded to the ground floor again, the front door was opened and Ryan admitted.

"As the gang was using the house as a rat-trap, you had better keep up the trick," Joe Phenix remarked. "By remaining in possession you may be able to catch some stray fish. I will drop in and see you in the morning, and then we can map out a plan of action."

"It is late now, and I must get this young lady home. We'll take a hack so we can drive out."

The detectives thought this plan would do; so they remained in possession of the house while Joe Phenix and his decoy-duck departed.

CHAPTER XVIII.

SEARCHING FOR THE TRUTH.

DURING their homeward ride, Joe Phenix and Kate Scott discussed the situation in all its bearings, and the detective believed he was shrewd enough to guess the game that the rascals had been up to.

"They did not make any mistake about the matter," he asserted, in a tone of conviction.

"They knew perfectly well that you were not Miss Auchinclose. That was a blind to close your eyes. Such shrewd rascals, as these fellows evidently are, would never make such a clumsy blunder."

"But what is their game—what are they driving at, anyway? It is not clear to me," Kate Scott remarked.

"Well, I can only guess at it, and that makes me think the scheme is a particularly deep and dangerous one. But as far as I can see into the matter, old Campbell Auchinclose was foully dealt with, and his will destroyed so as to put the property into the hands of this girl, and now the game will be to get at the money through her in some way."

"I imagine this clairvoyant business was leading up to it."

"Yes, that is what it looks like."

"I did fancy that the game was to have Madame Mendoza gain an influence over Miss Auchinclose by her pretended revelation, though the young heiress does not seem to be weak-minded enough for such a game to be successfully worked; but now the abrupt departure of the madame for Europe seems to upset the idea."

"And the dodge, too, about showing Miss Auchinclose the picture, in the magic pebble, of the gentleman who rescued her from the tramps," Kate Scott observed, shrewdly.

"That was a trick, of course," Joe Phenix replied.

"No clairvoyant can do anything of the kind, although there are plenty of frauds who pretend to work miracles of that sort."

"But the object of the trick, for it was not worked without an object of course?"

"It might be to impress Miss Auchinclose with the idea that the clairvoyant was a great creature," the detective replied, slowly, as though the subject was one which required considerable thought.

"But how did the clairvoyant know anything about this incident? How did she procure the picture of the stranger, for she must have had a picture, or else she would not have been able to work the trick?"

"Very true, and that leads to another question. Who is this stranger, and is there any connection between him and the clairvoyant?"

"It looks as if there was," Kate Scott exclaimed, in a tone of conviction.

"Indeed it does, and the moment we arrive

at that fact, we are beginning to get at the heart of as great a conspiracy as ever was plotted in a criminal way. A new light has suddenly flashed upon me.

"Now listen while I explain how I have worked it out, and see if you can discover any weak points in the narrative."

"To begin at the beginning, Campbell Auchinclose is alive and reported to be worth five or six million dollars."

"This housekeeper, Miss Du Burg, who is really a fascinating and accomplished woman, served him faithfully, and he had promised that when he died he would remember her in his will in such a way as to make her independent of the world."

"But he was not a man of his word, and when he made his will ignored her altogether."

"She was keen enough to find this out, and, smarting under the wrong, joined hands with some accomplished rascals for the purpose of obtaining through their aid some of the money which she considered ought to have come to her."

"Campbell Auchinclose was poisoned, and the job performed so skillfully that it looked as if the man had taken the dose himself, either by accident or design, then the will was stolen and destroyed."

"This gave the property to the young lady."

"The murder was arranged so as to take place on the night before the day on which Miss Auchinclose was to return home."

"The murder was the first move; the second was to get rid of the coachman who was sent to meet the girl at the depot and drive her home."

"He was induced to drink—was drugged, so that another man, got up to resemble him, could take his place. In the darkness the deception was easily carried out."

"Accident favored the plotters, for the train was late, then; on the homeward road, there was another delay on account of a pretended loss of a shoe."

"The idea of this was to make the time of arrival at Pine Tree Hall so late that few people would be about to detect the false driver."

"Then there was another stoppage on the road on account of the harness giving way, and the driver takes the horse away to have the break repaired, leaving the ladies alone in the carriage."

"This was done so the tramps could play their part in the comedy."

"Then, when they threatened the young ladies, the good-looking stranger made his appearance and drives them off; plays the role of a hero, in fact, naturally producing an extremely favorably impression, and then disappears without telling who, or what he is."

"This gives an air of mystery, and makes the incident doubly romantic."

"Then, as time passes on, Miss Auchinclose is induced to go to the clairvoyant's, and there, under seemingly supernatural circumstances, she sees a picture of the gentleman."

"And now the next move in the game will undoubtedly be for the party to make his appearance and lay siege to the heiress."

"Well, upon my word!" exclaimed Kate Scott in astonishment, when the detective had finished; "you are giving this gang the credit for planning a most elaborate scheme."

"Yes, and I don't think there is the least doubt that I have hit upon the truth, and if it is so, we will be able to block the game of the rascals, unless they take the alarm and manage to put us out of the way."

"They could have settled you to-night, if they had cared to do so, and no power on earth could have saved you."

Kate Scott shrugged her shoulders.

"Ah, well, a miss is as good as a mile, and I will take good care that they do not get another chance at me."

By this time they were within half a mile of Pine Tree Hall, and as it would have excited remark if the two had driven up to the mansion in a carriage together, Joe Phenix stopped the coach, he and Kate got out, then he paid the driver and dismissed him.

Kate went on at once to the house, while Joe Phenix came along slowly in the rear.

The idea of this was so they should not both arrive at the same time.

And as he approached the house, the detective took the flaxen-haired wig from his pocket and adjusting it upon his head, assumed the appearance of the stolid German again.

It was the rule at Pine Tree Hall for the servants to be all in the house at eleven, at the latest, but it was nearer twelve when the pair arrived, but as both of them had been provided with latch-keys it did not matter.

As Phenix approached the house, he saw that there was a light in the library, and understood from this that the old lawyer had not yet retired to rest.

The judge was a late bird, and seldom went to bed until about midnight.

After the ladies retired, which was usually about ten, the old lawyer went to the library and either worked or read there for a couple of hours.

After entering the house, Joe Phenix made his way at once to the judge's presence.

Mr. Colamore was glancing over the evening newspapers when the detective entered.

"Well, Carl, are you back?" said the old lawyer.

Be it remembered that Phenix's disguise was so perfect that the judge had not the least suspicion that his servant was the great detective himself, although he knew that the pretended servant was a police spy.

In reply, Joe Phenix put his hand to his head and removed the wig for a moment.

The change that this produced was wonderful, and one would hardly believe that by so slight a means so great an effect could be produced.

"Well, well, I am astonished!" the judge exclaimed.

Joe Phenix immediately replaced the wig, and was again the stupid, stolid-looking German.

"I think I have hit a clew at last, judge," he said, "but I haven't got hold of sufficient to warrant any explanation at present; but soon, I think, I will be able to let in a little light on the mystery."

"Well, I sincerely hope so!" the judge exclaimed. "By the by, I inquired about that will matter to-day, and there isn't the least doubt that such a document was executed."

"That is important information; but stop a bit, judge, until I see that we are safe from listeners."

Then, to the astonishment of the old lawyer, he proceeded to examine the drawers in the bottoms of the bookcases, and the judge's amazement was great when the detective showed him where a hiding-place had been arranged.

"Well, well, I wouldn't have suspected any such thing!" was the judge's comment.

Satisfied that they were free from observation, Phenix took a chair.

"Now, then, about the will," he said.

"I took occasion to question the servant who I thought likely would be called upon by Auchinclose to witness the will."

"The law requires two witnesses, you know, and the one most likely I took to be the butler, Tompkins, for he has been with Auchinclose for a long time, ten or fifteen years, and in such a case as this I thought Auchinclose would be likely to pitch upon him."

"And your surmise was correct?"

"It was; and as from Tompkins I found out all I wanted to know I did not question the other witness."

"Who was the other?"

"Spriggins, the tall, thin fellow, you know." Phenix nodded.

This was the man whom he suspected of being "crooked."

"They were both summoned into this room one evening by Auchinclose."

"I want you to witness my signature to my will," he said.

"Then he signed the document, and the others affixed their signatures, but it was so folded that they could not get any view of the contents."

Auchinclose then gave them a dollar apiece to drink his health and dismissed them, and the butler correctly described the envelope in which I inclosed the will."

"Oh, there isn't the least doubt that the paper was executed and then stolen."

"But I don't see any reason for such an act."

"In a short time I may be able to explain, for I think I am on the right track."

And with this explanation the lawyer was forced to be content.

CHAPTER XIX.

AT THE CLUB.

THANKS to Barry Livingstone's introduction, the Marquis of Morel found no difficulty in securing an *entrée* into some of the best circles in New York.

The aristocracy of great Gotham doth dearly love a lord, although one would think from the number of times that the upperdom of New York has been victimized by the litigious article, the good people would be particular how they admitted strangers to their hearths and homes, yet, as a rule, almost any dashing swindler can make a sensation for a while, if he has the necessary assurance and cash to get a good start.

Naturally, the moment that Barry Livingstone announced that his European friend, the Marquis de Morel, had arrived in town, he had to submit to a deal of banter, more or less good-natured.

"Bet you a new hat that it is some barber that Livingstone picked up in Europe, and now he wants to gull us!" exclaimed a doubter.

"Morel! that's an Italian name, I think, and marquises in Italy are as thick as colonels down South, where you can't throw a stone down the main street of any village without hitting a dozen," suggested another.

"I wonder if he brought his hand-organ and monkey along!" cried a third.

"Bah!" ejaculated a fourth, in supreme contempt, "if you want to see a real Italian marquis, go to one of the stale beer dives in the Bend in Baxter street!"

But all this sort of talk was stopped when the gentleman made his appearance, for there was

something about the man which seemed to say to the young bloods that whether he was a marquis or not, he was a man able to protect himself, and with whom it would not be wise to quarrel.

Then, too, two or three of the other young men about town, of the Barry Livingstone stamp, had encountered the marquis while abroad, and while, of course, they could not swear to his patent of nobility, yet they could bear witness that he was called the Marquis of Morel and seemed to move in good society.

Personally, he appeared to be a polished, agreeable gentleman, and what contributed more than anything else to make him "solid"—to use the slang of the day—with the upperdom, was the circulation of the report that he was about to invest largely in real estate in New York and its neighborhood, and had employed Judge Colamore to look after his interests, "society" shrewdly reasoned that no mere adventurer would do anything of this kind.

So Barry Livingstone, in his desire to please his friend, did not find it difficult to get him into the "swim," as he would have expressed it.

Livingstone was a member of half a dozen of the leading clubs, as became a man who had an income of fifty thousand dollars a year and desired to spend it like a gentleman, and into all these he introduced the marquis.

But the club that the young man most favored with his presence, was one of the least "tony" by long odds, the liveliest of the lot.

We'll call it the Star Club, although we will frankly admit that this was not its name, but as we are going to write pretty plainly about the club, we prefer not to particularize too closely.

As Barry Livingstone had informed the marquis, in a burst of confidence, it was the jolliest of the lot, and a man who couldn't amuse himself within the walls of this club-house must be hard to please.

It was one of the clubs where late hours were kept, and it was not until near midnight, when the theaters and other places of amusement were closed, that the club-rooms presented their most attractive sight.

The club was a "young" club, decidedly; the tone was too "fast" for the staid old businessmen, and few elderly gentlemen belonged to it.

There were some jolly old boys, though, who boasted that, in spite of their years, they liked a racket as well as the youngsters, but the club was mainly composed of young men.

Actors, journalists, artists, young bloods about town, with more money than brains, fast young business men, who believed in "seeing life" after the day's toil was done, and such as these, assembled nightly at the club-rooms.

There were ugly rumors extant in regard to some things connected with the organization.

It was said that in the cosey private rooms upstairs card-playing for high sums went on nightly, and though, while playing for money was not strictly prohibited, yet gambling, pure and simple, was supposed to be frowned upon.

But for all that, the belief was common that if a man had money to lose and was anxious to risk it at a game of "short-cards," he could be accommodated as quickly and as well in the private apartments of the Star Club as in any gaming-house in all New York.

Of course this report was not spread abroad on the wings of the wind, but it was whispered around on the quiet.

Now this sort of thing was exactly what Barry Livingstone and other young men of his class liked.

They would have lost caste, and been considered on the direct road to perdition if they had gone night after night to some public gambling-house and risked their money upon the uncertain pasteboards.

But they could sit up-stairs in the club and play cards for hours—for stakes, of course, "just large enough to make the game interesting," but for all of this declaration rumor said thousands of dollars had been known to change hands during one night's play.

This was the first visit that the marquis had made to this particular club, and on this evening Barry Livingstone had been showing his companion the sights of the town, and it was nearly midnight when they reached the club-house.

"You don't want to get there too early, dear boy, you know; the fun never begins until all the theaters are out," Livingstone explained.

And as, during their wanderings, they had not neglected to refresh the inner man—the said refreshment being much more fluid than solid—the two gentlemen felt very well disposed toward themselves and everybody else by the time they reached the club-house.

To speak more correctly, though, we should have said that Livingstone alone showed any signs that he had been indulging in "rosy wine," for his companion seemed to have a head of iron, and the liquor he drank, although it seemed to put him in good humor, otherwise had no more effect upon him than so much water.

Livingstone introduced the marquis to all of his particular friends, with the result that more wine was drank, and the members of the club did their best to make the stranger feel at home.

No pride of caste was there in this assemblage; they saw immediately that the stranger was a well-bred gentleman, a polished man of the world, and they never stopped to calculate whether he was a "really, truly" lord or not.

They accepted him on Barry Livingstone's account, and did their best to make him feel at home.

"You must come up-stairs and see our accommodations for little private parties," Livingstone remarked, taking advantage of a full in the conversation.

"And I say, old fellow," this in the ear of the marquis, "if you feel like having a little fun with the pasteboards, I don't doubt we can pass an hour or two away very agreeably, for I see some fellahs here who are jolly sports at that sort of thing."

"I shall be delighted, of course," the marquis replied.

"These fellahs play a pretty big game, sometimes," Livingstone warned.

"I remember one night when we were at it until the morning light came in at the window, I dropped two thousand dollars."

"Well, that was considerable of a sum."

"Yas, but I know one fellah who got cleaned out of five thousand in one night."

"The game must have been a heavy one."

"Oh, it was, but then, you know, we are all gentlemen here, and if a man does get nipped pretty badly once in a while, he never thinks of kicking—you catch the meaning of that, I presume?—that is one of our peculiar American expressions."

"Oh, yes, the meaning is so plain that he who runs may read."

"Perhaps you are not acquainted with our game, though; it is poker."

"Oh, yes, I have played it in England, though not to any extent. It is much the same as the old and almost obsolete English game of bluff."

"Well, I am glad you are acquainted with it, although it is a very easy game to learn—costs some money, though, sometimes, before a man gets the hang of it."

"Yes, I should imagine so."

Just then a young gentleman, who bore a strong resemblance to Livingstone, came up and was introduced by Barry to the marquis as his cousin, Richmond Livingstone.

"Are you going up-stairs, Rich?" Barry asked.

"Yes, we are going to have a little game; there are three of 'em at it now. And, by the way, who do you think put in an appearance tonight?"

"Really don't know—haven't the slightest idea, dear boy."

"Jim Campbell!"

"You don't say so?"

"Fact, 'pon honor, and he is looking deuced well, too."

"Where has he been all these years?"

"Off in China; been an officer in the Chinese naval service, and they say he has come home pretty well fixed."

"Well, I am glad to hear it! Although folks used to say that Jim was a wild fellow, yet I have always thought he never had justice done him," Barry remarked, reflectively.

"You see, marquis, Campbell comes of a good old Scotch family, but he was left an orphan at an early age.

"He was brought up, by the way, marquis, in that very house where we dined with Judge Colamore the other day, Pine Tree Hall.

"His father and Mr. Auchinclose—the father of that pretty girl, you know, now deceased—were great chums, and Jim was named after Mr. A.; James Auchinclose Campbell is his full name.

"As I said, he was reared by Mr. Auchinclose, but he and the old gentleman never got on well together, and when he was about sixteen he ran away and went to sea, then he got out to Peru and had a hand in the fight out there, then drifted to China, and now has come home, in good feather, apparently, and as fine a locking fellow as ever caught a girl's eye."

"Yes, talking of girls' eyes, the gossip is that Jim and old Auchinclose's daughter used to be sweet on each other, and now that the old fellow is dead, Jim has come back with the idea of marrying the girl, for she is a rich prize now."

"You have excited my curiosity," the marquis remarked in his calm way. "I really think I would like to see this hero of adventure."

CHAPTER XX.

A LITTLE GAME.

"WELL, you can speedily be gratified by going up-stairs," Richmond Livingstone remarked.

"Is he indulging in a game?" Barry asked.

"Yes, I rather think he is, for that is what Dick Van Brunt wanted him to go up-stairs for," the other replied.

"You see, there was Dick Van Brunt and Teddy Roosevelt, and the two had been chafing each other about their skill in card-playing for quite awhile, and finally Dick challenged Teddy to go up-stairs and back his opinion with a little

hard cash, for, as Dick justly observed, talk was cheap, but it took money to buy land, and in order to make up a party they persuaded Jim Campbell to take a hand, although he said that, as a rule, he seldom played, for he had done a great deal of that sort of thing during his absence abroad, and was of the opinion it would have been a great deal better for him if he had let cards alone."

"Yas, I suppose with the fellahs whom he must have met during his travels high play was the rule."

"Probably," the marquis observed.

"He finally went with them, though."

"The gentleman will secure a rich prize if he succeeds in marrying Miss Auchinclose," the marquis remarked, "for she is not only the heiress of a large estate, but also a most beautiful girl."

"Yas, I rather had an idea of making love to her myself," Barry Livingstone remarked, caressing his faint mustache, with the air of a man who knew he had but to pick and choose among the fair sex.

"But then, you see, love-making is such a deuced bore. A fellah has got to say all sorts of stupid things, you know."

"Yes, that is true enough; there's a certain amount of attention that a girl expects, but is there any truth in the rumor that there was a love affair between this gentleman and Miss Auchinclose before he went away?" the marquis asked, carelessly, just as if he took no particular interest in the thing, but was merely talking to pass the time away.

"Oh, I hardly think so," Barry Livingstone replied. "The girl wasn't anything more than a child at the time, and Jim is about six years older than she is."

"But, I say, Barry, old fellow, it would be a jolly good speculation for Jim to go in for the heiress!" the other young man suggested.

"I tell you, a girl with five millions of dollars is considerable of a catch, and Jim being a deuced good-looking fellow, with a deal of romance about him, would be apt to catch the fancy of a girl like Virginia Auchinclose."

"We will have to suggest the idea to him, dear boy," Barry remarked.

"Although, come to think of it, he may be married already."

"Yes, he may have a dozen wives, as some of these rovers are apt to possess," the marquis observed.

"Like a sailor, you know, a wife in every port."

"Yas, but I don't believe Jim would be fool enough to do anything like that," Barry Livingstone replied. "He was always a deuced sensible fellah; but let us go up-stairs and see how the boys are getting on."

The others were agreeable, and the three ascended to one of the small private apartments where the young men, who had been the subject of the conversation, were busily engaged at cards.

On the way up Barry Livingstone gave the marquis a brief account of the two young men in whose company the rover was.

"Dick Van Brunt and Teddy Roosevelt are two of the wildest boys in New York," he explained.

"No harm in them, you know, but they have plenty of money and go in for a good time; and that is one trouble about playing cards with them. After they get a little heated up, they always want to play for such deuced high stakes that a fellah who hasn't a long purse doesn't stand much chance."

"For that reason, you see, the fellahs generally don't like to play with them."

"Yes, quite natural too, I should think."

The three entered the room and the introductions took place.

There wasn't anything out of the common in the appearance of the two New York bloods, who were good representatives of the average young men-about-town.

Rather under the medium size, and poorly developed, physically, with the blue eyes and light hair which they inherited from their ancestors, for they were of the old Knickerbocker stock.

James Auchinclose Campbell though was a most decided contrast to the others, being about as handsome a specimen of a man as could be found in these degenerate days.

He was of medium height, and magnificently built, a man weighing about a hundred and eighty pounds, but who did not look to be within fifty pounds of that weight, so well-proportioned was he.

He had a handsome face, fringed with dark-brown hair, which curled in little ringlets all over his head; a long, silk-like mustache shaded his mouth, and a small imperial, both of the same hue as his hair, adorned his chin.

His features were finely cut, yet the square chin and resolute mouth told of both courage and firmness.

The once delicate white skin had been bronzed by the action of the sun and wind, and he looked like a man who might have seen many a stirring adventure in foreign lands.

There wasn't any thing rough or rude about him, for, despite the wild life which he had led,

he was as polished a gentleman as one would be apt to meet in all New York.

The two New Yorkers were delighted to see the new-comers, the more so because they had heard of the marquis; rumor said that he was a man of large wealth, and considerable of a "sport," to use the polite meaning of the word.

Here, then, was a foeman worthy of their steel, for, when these young men sat down at a card-table, they were as eager to win the money of those against whom they played, as any gamblers that ever roped a "pigeon" into a "brace" game to be plucked.

Not that they craved the money, but they liked the excitement, and the most inveterate card-player that ever lived seldom is able to extract satisfaction from a losing game.

The two had expected to have some "fun" with Campbell, but that gentleman was not only a cool and calculating fellow, but also an expert card-player, as the young men soon discovered; a far better player in reality than either of the two, and at the time of the entrance of the new-comers, Campbell had by far the best of the game.

So the young bloods were delighted to see the marquis, for they reasoned that it was not likely he could be an expert at the noble game of poker.

When the marquis and Campbell were introduced, they shook hands and expressed their pleasure after the usual fashion, but even as they clasped hands and glared at each other's faces a mutual feeling of aversion sprung up in their minds.

It is so sometimes in this life; there is a subtle instinct in our nature which warns us that the stranger we meet is destined to prove a foe.

The new-comers took seats at the table and the game began.

For about two hours the play went on without an intermission, and then by general consent the gentlemen halted and sent for refreshments.

During this time the young bloods who had been so anxious to get the stranger into the game, had made an important discovery.

Although the marquis at the beginning had expressed himself as being almost a novice at the game, and had said, in a joking manner, that he hoped the others wouldn't be too hard on him, yet now that the first "round" was over, the result showed that, whether the stranger "understood" the game or not, he had managed to come out a large winner.

He had shown that he was fully as heavy a "plunger" as either one of the bloods, and as good a judge of the value of hands as any man at the table.

The game had been a rather reckless one, and the stakes high whenever either of the two bloods had a chance to "force" the betting.

And the result had been that Dick Van Brunt and Teddy Roosevelt were heavy losers.

The two Livingstones had also lost, but not to a great extent, while Campbell and the marquis had won.

Campbell, though, was only a few hundred dollars ahead, but the marquis could count his gains by the thousands.

After the refreshments were dispatched Campbell endeavored to have the party excuse him on the ground that he was tired and would prefer to go to bed, but the rest wouldn't hear of it.

"Oh, no, dear boy, you mustn't quit the game now!" Van Brunt exclaimed.

"You owe me my revenge, you know!"

And so, under the circumstances, Campbell was reluctantly compelled to remain.

The party continued at the card-table until the gray light of the dawn came in at the window.

The result at the end was just the same as it had been when the party ceased for refreshments, with the exception that the Livingstones had not been able to hold their own and had lost heavily.

But not to the extent that the two bloods had suffered.

After the game ended another round of "refreshments" were called for, and while they were being discussed Van Brunt and Roosevelt compared notes.

They stood a little apart from the others, who were busy in conversation, so that their words were unheeded by the rest.

"By Jove! Teddy, old boy, this has been a tough night's work!" Van Brunt exclaimed.

"Tough, dear fellah, is no name for it," replied Roosevelt, picking at the leg of a chicken as he spoke.

"It has been devilish, dear boy, devilish! That is the proper word for it."

"Yas, I believe you are about right. I say, old fellah, I've been hit pretty badly tonight."

"Egad, no worse than I have been."

"Well, I don't know about that," Van Brunt replied. "I have just been trying to figure up in my head how much I am out, and I tell you the amount is astonishing."

"Yes, old fellah, but I don't believe you have been hit any more than I have been."

"Of course I can't tell about that, but it does-

n't seem to me as if you could possibly have lost as much money as I have."

"How much are you out?"

"Guess!"

"Five thousand!"

"More!"

"You don't say so!"

"Fact! a little over seven!"

"By Jove! you have been hard hit."

"Yes; and we rather thought we could play this marquis for a flat, you know."

And then the two groaned in concert.

"Where are you going, Barry?" asked Campbell, as the party broke up.

"Home, I guess."

"Come and take breakfast with me."

Livingstone accepted the invitation.

CHAPTER XXI.

CAMPBELL'S SUSPICIONS.

CAMPBELL and Barry Livingstone went off together when the party separated.

The young New Yorker felt all "played out," as he expressed it, while the other appeared to be about as fresh as when he had sat down to play.

Barry Livingstone remarked this and commented upon it.

"Dear boy," he exclaimed, "you must have an iron constitution to be able to stand an all-night spree like this without showing any particular signs of it. Now I am about done for."

"Merely the force of habit," Campbell explained. "If you had kept as many night-watches as I have, a little matter of this sort would not bother you any."

"No, I suppose not, but, you see, I have never had any training of that kind, and then I allowed myself to get deucedly excited over the game."

"You came out a loser?"

"Yes, tolerably heavy, too, but still nothing like what Van Brunt and Roosevelt lost."

"I was more fortunate."

"Yes, considerably so, I should judge. You must have won a nice little sum."

"Very true, and I am not particularly elated over it, either. The fact is, old fellow, I am not so young, nor so wild as I once was, and I am beginning to think that it doesn't do a man any good to indulge in this sort of amusement."

"Well, a little social game of cards isn't any harm, you know."

"Barry, old boy, it was gambling, pure and simple, that we were at, and there isn't the least bit of use for us to attempt to mince words about the matter," Campbell replied, decidedly.

"We were all gambling, just as much as if we had gone into a faro bank and staked our money upon the green cloth."

"Yes, you know, but the world at large don't look at it in that way."

"It is the truth though, all the same, and, as far as I am concerned, I will have no more of it."

By this time they were at the portal of Delmonico's, where Campbell purposed breakfasting, but Livingstone halted at the door.

"Upon my word, old fellow, I feel so utterly played out that I don't know but what it would be better for me to go home and go to bed," the young man said.

"Oh, come in and have a cup of coffee with a little bit of brandy in it; that will brace you up and make you feel like a new man."

"I shouldn't be surprised if it would."

"Besides, I want to have a little talk with you about a certain matter while the subject is fresh in my mind."

"All right."

Entering the well-known resort—New York's most celebrated restaurant—they procured a private room, and Campbell ordered breakfast.

And, as he had predicted, after Barry Livingstone had dispatched the cup of coffee, strengthened with the brandy, he felt decidedly better, and upon expressing himself to this effect, the other remarked:

"I thought it would be so. The combination of the coffee and the brandy is generally effective. Good liquor is a very good thing in its way. 'Tis in the abuse and not in the use of it where the harm comes in."

Campbell had ordered a breakfast calculated to tempt the appetite of a jaded man, all light and no hearty dishes, commencing with raw oysters, and a bottle of Chablis.

And while they ate, the conversation went on.

Barry Livingstone could not boast of much appetite, but the other did full justice to the viands, as became a man to whom the loss of a few hours' sleep was a small matter.

"Yes, as I was saying, I shall not take part in any more such sport," Campbell remarked.

"It is about time for me to have sown all my wild oats, and I am not going to begin afresh now that I have returned to my native city."

"Well, I think myself that we did go it pretty strongly," Barry Livingstone admitted.

"Yes, I should say we did."

"The play was deuced high; there's no doubt about it; and, as you say, it was about as near

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gambling as men could come without actually patronizing a regular gaming-place."

"That is my idea exactly."

"And if the thing should get out I have no doubt it would cause a deal of talk."

"Yes, I should imagine so; and, by the way, how are our friends, Van Brunt and Roosevelt, off for money?"

"Well, they are rich, of course, although I have no doubt that they have got rid of a deal of money during the past two or three years."

"Are they rich enough to be able to afford the luxury of losing five or six thousand dollars apiece at a single sitting?"

Barry Livingstone stared in amazement.

"You don't mean to say that either one of them lost any such sum as that?"

"Yes, I do; as near as I can figure it, neither Van Brunt or Roosevelt lost less than five thousand apiece."

"Well, I am really astonished! I am out a thousand or so, and my idea was that they had got in for about double of what I was stuck."

"But, I say, who won all this cash?"

"Your friend, the marquis."

"Well, well, I am amazed! I knew he was a winner, of course, but I hadn't any idea that he had got away with any ten or twelve thousand dollars."

"It is the truth."

"There's an old saying that it is better to be born lucky than rich, and I don't know but what it is about right."

"Possibly."

"Beyond a doubt the marquis is about as lucky a man as I ever met in all my experience. I remember when I ran across him at Monaco—you know, the celebrated gambling-place in Europe!"

The other nodded.

"Well, there he always seemed to be lucky. He won when everybody else lost."

"Where did you make the acquaintance of this gentleman?"

"In Paris when I was across the water a couple of years ago."

"How call you his name?"

"Andrea, Marquis de Morel; but he drops the marquis on this side of the herring pond, you know, and calls himself plain Andrea Morel."

"He may drop the marquis, but almost everybody salutes him by that title, though."

"Well, he can't help that, you know. Of course, when it gets out that a man is a marquis, it is the most natural thing in the world for people who make his acquaintance to address him by his title."

"Yes, I see. Well, that is only natural, of course; but, Barry, old fellow, do you think this gentleman is what he pretends to be?"

"I don't think I get your meaning correctly."

"Do you think he is really a marquis?"

"Oh, yes, there isn't the least doubt about that."

"How do you know?"

"Well, he moved in good society when I met him in Europe, and everybody called him marquis, so there isn't the least doubt about it."

"Good society in Paris is one thing and good society in a gambling hell like Monaco is another," replied Campbell, who had been an extensive traveler and knew what he was talking about.

"Of course I suppose there is a difference."

"Not the least doubt of it. And to this good society in Paris, where you encountered the marquis, how gained you admission?"

"Oh, I had letters of introduction to our minister and he put me through."

"Then, I presume, it would not have been a difficult matter for a dashing chevalier of fortune—an adventurer—to gain admission to this good society of which you speak?"

"Of course not! Why, I can recall a case which happened while I was in Paris. There was a Baron something or other—I never can keep the outlandish names in my head; he pretended to be a Russian, I think, who cut quite a dash and was all the rage for a time, until he was detected cheating at cards, and then it came out that he was no baron at all, but a French adventurer who had served his time at the galleys at Toulon."

"From that it could be argued, then, that the fact of your encountering the marquis in this good society of which you have spoken is no real guarantee that he is what he pretends to be?"

"Oh, no, but still there isn't the least doubt that the marquis is all right."

And it was plain from the confident manner in which the young man spoke that there wasn't any doubt in his mind in regard to the matter.

"I have taken quite an interest in this gentleman," Campbell remarked. "It isn't often, you know, that we have a chance to become intimately acquainted with a member of the nobility in this country."

"How is the marquis situated? Is he one of the old style, with wealth galore, or a member of the new order, with plenty of titles and no money?"

"Oh, no, the marquis is a man of means; why, he is going to buy a country place worth thirty thousand dollars out by Throg's Point."

"The next house, by the way, to the Auchin-

close place; and, speaking of that, the marquis has been deeply impressed with the beauty of Miss Virginia Auchinclose, and, between you and me, old boy, I rather think that if the young lady cared to do anything of the kind, she could wear a title as soon as she liked."

"The marquis has been fascinated, then?"

"Oh, yes, not the least doubt about that!"

"With the lady's beauty, or with her bank-account?" asked Campbell, dryly.

"Ha, ha! that is a sort of a joke, isn't it?"

"Yes, you'll find there is considerable humor in a gentleman about my size," the other responded.

"And a deal of imagination, too," Campbell continued. "Why, do you know, during our game last night, when luck seemed to favor the marquis so much the idea came into my head that this stranger might be one of the class whom the French describe as always aiding fortune by holding a good hand."

"That is, you thought he was cheating," and Barry Livingstone looked grave.

"Yes, that is about what I thought. In the course of my travels I have met with some pretty expert card-sharpers—fellows who could deal as easily from the bottom of the pack as from the top."

"But you didn't really detect the marquis in doing anything of the kind?" the other exclaimed.

"No, if he did cheat, he did the trick in so masterly a manner as to defy detection."

"He is undoubtedly a skillful player, and then he had wonderful luck."

"Or else cheated in the most superb manner," responded Campbell.

"Oh, I don't think that can be possible; I feel sure that he is too much of a gentleman to do anything of the kind."

"Well, of course you know more about the man than I do, and then, I suppose, I am rather inclined to be suspicious. By the way, don't say anything about this, because it would be deuced unpleasant if any ugly rumors should get abroad."

"Oh, I wouldn't mention it!"

And then the conversation turned to other matters which concern not our tale.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE MEETING.

AGAIN we turn to a meeting of the conspirators, but not now in the house of the clairvoyant.

That rendezvous the police had under their surveillance, to use it as a trap for the catching of rascals; but, though they held possession of the place for nearly a week, its only visitors were the credulous, who would read the future by the aid of Madame Mendoza. So the detectives, concluding that they had thoroughly frightened away the gang who used the house for a headquarters, abandoned the premises.

The conspirators had selected for their new meeting-place an old house, down by the shore, but a short distance from the Auchinclose estate.

Old Monkey, disguised as a boatman, had hired the house.

It was in a lonely, out-of-the-way place, and no neighbors being within sight it was secure from observation.

Then, too, being only a stone's throw from the water, it was easy of access by means of a boat, and, in case of a descent of the police, escape could be effected by boat.

The house was on a little open space or plain, so that any one approaching could be at once seen, if a lookout was kept, and such was the case, for Old Monkey had provided himself with a couple of dogs, Scotch terriers, wiry, watchful little fellows, and they, being always on the alert, made it impossible for any one to come near the house without their giving an alarm.

The crook bought a couple of old boats, some lobster-nets and other fishing gear, so that, if any inquisitive neighbor should come over on a tour or inspection, it would appear that the new tenant was one of those vagabond-like men who manage to get a meager living out of the water.

It was about eight o'clock. Within this old shanty sat two of the conspirators—Old Monkey and Loenthal.

The broker was disguised in an old suit of rough clothes, with a soft felt hat, pulled down low over his eyes—thus looking more like a tramp than a Wall street man, while Old Monkey, in his weather-worn clothes, with a "sou'wester" canted on the back of his head, appeared exactly like an "alongshore" man.

"It is about time the rest were here," observed the Jew, glancing at the little clock ticking on the wall.

"Yes; but remember they come by a round-about way, and take precautions, too, that they are not followed."

"Ah, yes; I did not think of that."

The dogs outside began to bark, and rushed away from the house.

"That is our men, I guess," Old Monkey remarked. "You remain here while I examine," and stepping outside the crook fol-

lowed the dogs, to find that it was Captain Rats and Nailmaker; and the two were accompanied by a third, a slender, effeminate-looking fellow of eighteen or twenty, apparently.

He had jet-black, curly hair, and a swarthy face, as dark, almost, as an Indian's, and evidently was a foreigner.

Captain Rats and Nailmaker had come armed with canes, which stood them in good stead now, in keeping the terriers at a distance.

Old Monkey cast a searching glance at this stranger.

"It's all right!" Captain Rats explained.

"Don't you see who it is?"

"Yes, now I do," Old Monkey replied, "but under other circumstances I don't believe I would."

"The get-up is a good one, and I say, old man, these dogs of yours are vigilant beasts!" the captain observed.

"Well, I think it would be a difficult matter for a stranger to approach the house without their giving an alarm."

Monkey drove the dogs away, and conducted the party to the house.

Loenthal greeted them cordially as they entered, but cast a curious glance at the young man.

"This is an old pal of ours; he's in the ring," Captain Rats observed, noticing the questioning look. "Louis Franco, or Black Frank, to give him his 'cross' name."

"Ah, yes; but we don't want too many in der game, you know," the Jew observed evidently suspicious.

"Too many cooks spoils der broth!"

"Yes, but a cook of his standing will aid the dish," the other replied.

"Don't you be alarmed; this party has been in the game from the beginning, and is as safe as any of us."

The shanty could not boast of much furniture, there being only a table, two old chairs, a rude bunk, and a dilapidated stove, in the room.

The Jew sat on one of the chairs, by the table, whereon a small coal-oil lamp burned. Captain Rats courteously brought forward the other chair for the accommodation of the youth, then took a seat himself upon the bunk where Old Monkey and Nailmaker sat.

"Now then that we are all assembled, I suppose we can debate in regard to our scheme without any danger that we can possibly be overheard," Captain Rats remarked.

"Oh, we can speak freely, beyond a doubt," Old Monkey assented.

"You saw yourself how quick the dogs were to give an alarm when you approached the house."

"Yes, the little brutes discovered us just about as soon as we distinguished the house," Nailmaker observed.

"They are on the watch all the time, but they are more vigilant at night than during the day," Old Monkey stated.

"Oh, we will be safe in speaking freely," Captain Rats declared. "And it is well that it is so, for we want a frank and full discussion of this matter, as the outlook is not as promising as it might be."

"We certainly made a complete failure in the clairvoyant-house business," the youth observed. "And if it had not been for the captain's caution in providing a retreat by means of the scuttle in the roof, all in the house would have been captured."

The others nodded their heads. There wasn't the least doubt in their minds in regard to this.

"The interference of a man like this Joe Phoenix was not counted upon when we hatched the scheme," the youth continued.

"We calculated that the detectives might be called in, but then we thought they would be of the usual kind, and believed that after a brief investigation they would give the thing up as a bad job."

"But this man is a regular bloodhound," Captain Rats observed.

"Oh, yes, no doubt about it. A man of genius, and it isn't any wonder he has been so successful in his career."

"True, and we mustn't make the mistake of under-estimating him," the captain remarked.

"Why, in order to satisfy his mind as to how the birds escaped from the house, when he thought they were safe in the trap, he caused inquiries to be made at every house in the block to which the fugitives could have gained access by means of the roof, and when he found that one of the houses, on the next street, provided furnished rooms, he immediately came to the conclusion that one of these rooms had been hired, so that a means of retreat could be had, and then he set to work to discover the particulars in regard to every lodger in the house, especially the late comers."

"But he wouldn't think of suspecting a respectable man who had occupied a room in the house for two years," the Jew remarked, and he grinned as he spoke.

"No, a gentleman like yourself was above suspicion, and the bloodhound was baffled."

Just at this point the dogs barked again.

few sharp barks, and then they rushed away from the house.

"Hallo! what does that mean?" cried Captain Rats.

"Some one is approaching," said Old Monkey.

"Can it be possible that we have been followed?" the youth exclaimed.

"I will soon ascertain," responded Old Monkey, and then he beckoned Nailmaker to follow him.

CHAPTER XXIII.

A DIABOLICAL PLOT.

As the two men hurried out of the house they drew their revolvers.

The night was neither dark nor light.

The moon had not yet risen, but the heavens were clear and filled with countless stars, so the two men were able to distinguish objects pretty well.

The dogs were some distance away and had stopped their continuous barking, only giving a short, angry growl every once in awhile.

Old Monkey and Nailmaker hastened after them.

"They haven't got anybody at bay there, evidently," Nailmaker remarked, "or else they wouldn't take matters so quietly."

"Yes, that's true; if there was anybody there they would make a terrible racket."

The terriers were about a thousand yards away from the house, sniffing about in a little clump of bushes, but when the men arrived on the spot they were not able to discover anything suspicious.

The dogs smelt around amid the bushes, and every now and then they pointed their noses to the eastward and gave utterance to a quick, sharp bark, as if they had a suspicion that all was not right."

Old Monkey and Nailmaker listened intently, for the thought came to them that some spy might have been endeavoring to reach the house, and had been discovered and frightened away by the dogs, but, though they strained their ears, no sound of retreating footsteps could they catch.

"I thought that it might be a spy," Old Monkey observed.

"Yes, so did I."

"But it isn't likely."

"No."

"Some stray dog maybe."

"Yes, or some wild animal."

"Well, spy or not, no man can get near the house as long as the dogs are on the lookout, so we are safe as far as that is concerned."

The pair waited for a few minutes until the dogs quieted down, and then they returned to the house and reported the conclusion to which they had come.

"I don't think we're followed, for we took all possible precautions against such a thing," Captain Rats remarked.

"And if we were followed, I am certain that neither Joe Phenix nor Kate Scott had any thing to do with it," the youth asserted, positively. "For both were busily engaged in the house, and, under the circumstances, it is not possible that either one could get a chance to play the spy."

There was a grave look on the face of Captain Rats, and he shook his head.

"This is ugly," he remarked.

"How so?" asked Loenthal, evidently anxious.

"Why, don't you see? If there was a spy on our track, and it is certain that it was neither Joe Phenix nor Kate Scott, then it is evident that there is a third bloodhound after us, and we are in the dark as to who it is."

And now the rest all shook their heads, for the words of the captain made a deep impression upon them.

"Well, if such is the case," Old Monkey remarked, "there is only one thing to be done. We must lay a trap for the spy and put him out of the way."

"Yes, yes," assented the others.

"But one thing we can be certain of, and that is, the keenest spy that ever trod the earth will not be able to approach this house near enough to gain any information while the dogs keep watch without."

"Of course I believe in always taking proper precautions," Nailmaker remarked. "But in this case I don't think there is any cause to be alarmed."

"My idea is that the terriers went off in chase of some dog, or something of that kind."

"We will be on our guard though," Captain Rats observed.

"We will take the ground that we were tracked by a spy and followed to this house; then, when the spotter attempted to come near, for the purpose of finding out what we were about, the dogs went for him and he took to his heels, fearing discovery."

"Now, if this assumption is true, the fellow will wait at a safe distance so as to be able to track us when we depart."

"We can easily beat that game by means of the boat," Old Monkey exclaimed.

"Exactly! that was just what I was going to say," the captain remarked.

"And that will throw the spy off the track, if he was the truest-nosed bloodhound that ever followed a trail."

The rest assented to this.

"And now that this matter is disposed of, let us survey the field and see how we stand," Captain Rats continued.

"So far the scheme has worked to perfection, and in the future all looks fair, with the exception of the fact that these two spies are domiciled in the house."

"Yes, that is ugly," Old Monkey remarked.

"There isn't the least doubt about that!" exclaimed the youth.

"And, in my judgment, their presence in the house blocks the game; for so long as they are in the mansion there is danger of discovery at any moment; and now, mark you, the critical time is approaching."

"On the next move the game depends!"

"Yes, yes; dot ish so!" the Jew assented.

"And when that move is made, will not this bloodhound, with his wonderful sagacity, detect that there is something wrong about the matter?"

"Hardly, I think," Captain Rats replied. "To do that would require him to possess a judgment approaching the supernatural."

"Oh, but this man is terribly dangerous!" the youth exclaimed.

"Think at what a disadvantage we would have been placed if we had not made the lucky discovery that the old lawyer suspected there had been foul play and employed the detective."

"Yes; if we had not known that Phenix and his spy were in the house we might have been trapped, for we should not have been on the lookout," Nailmaker remarked.

"I tell you, as long as we attempt to carry out our scheme with these two spies where they can constantly keep their eyes upon us, we are walking on the crust of a volcano which is liable at any time to give way beneath our feet and let us sink to destruction!" the youth exclaimed.

From the grave faces of the others it was evident that the words made a great impression.

"Of course, there is not the least doubt that it would be decidedly to our advantage if we could get rid of the two," Captain Rats remarked after a pause, during which all present had been engaged in wrestling with the problem.

"Yes, yes, decidedly to our advantage!" Old Monkey exclaimed.

"No doubt about it!" added Nailmaker.

"Mine goodness!" exclaimed the Jew broker, "are we not like der mans dot we read of in der story—who ish to 'bell der cat'?"

"Well, that is about the idea of it," Captain Rats remarked.

"There isn't any doubt that Phenix and his spy ought to be put out of the way, but the question is how to do it?"

"It will not be an easy job," suggested Old Monkey.

"Oh, no, it will be a mighty difficult one!" Nailmaker exclaimed.

"Well, that depends upon how you go about it," the youth remarked.

"I think I have a scheme by means of which the trick can be done, and it will not be such a difficult matter to carry it out, either."

"It was always my opinion that you had more brains in your head than all the rest of us put together," the captain remarked.

And the others nodded as though they agreed with the speaker.

"Go ahead and explain," said Captain Rats.

"The plan is an extremely simple one," the youth remarked, while all the rest paid earnest attention.

"The problem is a difficult one, I admit, but, sometimes, the greatest puzzle can be solved so easily that after the trick is done everybody wonders how it was that it was not done before."

All the rest nodded in token that they were listening earnestly.

"Now, then, Joe Phenix, this bloodhound-like detective, and his female spy, Kate Scott, must be put out of the way, and yet the job must be performed so skillfully that their deaths will appear to be accidental, for if traces of violence appear in their taking off, it would immediately be apparent that they were killed because they were on the eve of an important discovery, and the result would be that we should have a whole host of detectives after us."

"Yes, yes, we must avoid that," Captain Rats observed, and the rest nodded assent.

"The two must be killed, and their deaths appear like the result of an accident."

"Aha! that is the game!" Old Monkey cried.

"Yes, but as our pal said, it is a difficult one," Nailmaker observed.

"I think we can work it, though," the youth observed, confidently.

"The two have rooms side by side in the extreme end of a wing of the mansion. The locks and bolts of the doors can be easily tampered with, so that admittance can be gained at night, when they are asleep, without any trouble."

"Then they can be chloroformed—a heavy dose—and the house set on fire right in their apartments."

"Before the alarm can be given and the doors broken open, the smoke, apparently, will have done its work, and the coroner's verdict will be accidental death by suffocation."

All agreed that the plan was an excellent one, and the details were discussed and arranged.

Then the meeting broke up, and the visitors departed by water in one of the boats, Old Monkey acting as oarsman.

If there was a spy lurking in the neighborhood, this mode of retreat prevented any watch being kept upon which way the conspirators went.

They were truly a wily and desperate band.

CHAPTER XXIV.

A CONFESSION.

The Marquis of Morel purchased the De Jones property, but instead of letting about all the purchase money remain on bond and mortgage, as Judge Colamore had suggested, he paid one-third cash, putting down ten thousand dollars with an easy carelessness natural to a man who had been born to wealth and had always had the handling of large sums of money.

As he remarked, in his leisurely, high-bred way:

"I have no particular use for this ten thousand, and I may as well put it into the property as to allow it to remain idle in the bank."

Of course the old lawyer believed that this money was some that the marquis had brought from Europe with him, and had no idea that it was the product of the foreign gentleman's skill and luck at the scientific game of poker, and that, in one sitting, he had netted a small fortune from the young bloods who had made the mistake of picking him up for a flat.

After buying the place, the gentleman proceeded to fit it up in fine style, the judge acting as his adviser.

The house was not a large one, but it was built in the best manner and furnished with all modern improvements, so that two thousand dollars fitted it up in very nice style.

The value of the property lay in the grounds, which extended to the water's edge, possessing a shore front.

As the marquis remarked, when he inspected the place, there was an excellent anchorage for a yacht, the beach running off rapidly into deep water so that a hundred-ton boat could come up to the picturesque, rough stone dock which jutted out from the shore.

"I suppose you intend to set up an establishment, as you are putting the house in order?" the judge remarked.

"Not at present," the marquis replied. "I shall keep bachelor's hall, just as is the fashion across the water."

"My valet is the handiest fellow in the world, and can cook equal to a French chef, and as he is never so delighted as when I allow him to look after the larder, I will do very well without a regular establishment at present."

"Taen, too, you know, I shall be in the city two-thirds of the time."

"And Pine Tree Hall is close at hand, where we shall always be glad to see you when you get tired of your solitude and yearn for a little company," the judge said.

The marquis expressed himself as being much pleased at the invitation, and said he would surely make a point of accepting it.

A stranger in a strange land, as he said, such frank kindness made him feel as if he had fallen among friends.

In reality, this was just exactly what the marquis was "fishing" for, to use the common phrase.

He had calculated that when he announced he intended to keep bachelor's hall, the old lawyer would extend to him the freedom of the Auchinclose mansion.

Judge Colamore had taken a great fancy to him, and urged him to call again every time he came, and as there was a great deal of consultation with the judge in regard to investing in real estate, the marquis stated that as soon as his affairs abroad were settled up, and it would not take long to do it, he intended to invest heavily in property in New York and its neighborhood, as he thought it would be to his interest so to do.

Naturally, these visits brought him much in contact with the two girls, and the impression he made was an extremely favorable one.

In the first place, both were disposed to like him on account of the part he had played on the night when he had come so opportunely to their rescue, but as he never referred to the affair in any way, it was evident that he did not remember them.

Miss Birdseye once had suggested that they ought to speak of the matter, so that they could have an opportunity to thank him in a proper manner for the great service which he had rendered them, but as Virginia seemed to have a

marked aversion to the subject, he did not bring it up.

the piano, had a capital tenor voice, and sung "divinely."

As he said in a joking manner, when complimented upon his singing:

"Yes, one of these grand-opera directors in Italy once had the impudence to advise me to go on the stage. He said that if I would only study and have my voice cultivated, there was a fortune in it, and I told him that when I was reduced to work for my living I would remember his offer and surely hunt him up," and then the marquis laughed in the heartiest manner, as though he thought it was an excellent joke, and the ladies laughed, too, for the idea seemed a ridiculous one.

The idea of a nobleman with a princely fortune becoming an opera singer.

The marquis was a skillful general and he saw he was gaining ground; like the able schemer that he was, he usually paid but little more attention to one girl than he did to the other.

Apparently, to one who was not a close observer, he appeared to be fully as attentive to Miss Birdseye, who could not boast of great wealth, as the heiress of five millions, but Pauline, with her quick shrewdness, was never deceived into the belief that the man cared anything for her, and she was perfectly sure that he did for her companion.

To repeat a conversation which occurred between the two friends one night after the marquis had departed, will best explain their thoughts in regard to him.

The gentlemen had been to dinner, then, when the repast had ended, all had gone to the parlor where the young people gathered around the piano, while the judge went to sleep in an easy-chair despite the music and the singing.

Then they adjourned to the piazza to watch the rising moon, and the marquis had fascinated his hearers with many a strange tale of wondrous adventures in far-off lands, for the gentleman had been quite a rover, as he himself admitted.

It was eleven o'clock before any one of the party thought of how the time was going, and it is certain that the interesting conversation would not have ceased then, if the judge hadn't happened to wake up and come out for the purpose of seeing what had become of the party.

All protested that they hadn't the least idea that it was so late; the marquis took his departure, and the others returned to their rooms.

The two girls, being eager to exchange confidences, Kate Scott was dismissed.

And she immediately went to her post of observation, where she could hear all the conversation between the two.

Knowing that the marquis had spent the evening there, Kate had an idea the girls would exchange opinions in regard to him.

She was not out of the way in this surmise, for after the two had assisted each other to remove their elaborate dresses and put on their wrappers, Virginia rung for cake and wine, for both craved a lunch before retiring.

And then, as they sipped their wine and nibbled at their cake, like a couple of school-girls, the conversation began.

"He's just perfectly splendid!" Pauline exclaimed.

"The marquis, or the judge?" asked Virginia, in the most innocent manner possible.

"Humph! just as if you didn't know which I meant."

"You didn't say which one."

"But you knew who I meant; but isn't he splendid?"

"He is very entertaining indeed, and I really think you made a great impression on him tonight."

"Oh, yes, I went for him, red-hot, if you will make me use slang!" Pauline exclaimed.

"Of course I did, and there isn't any mistake about it. Will you come to the wedding when it takes place?"

"Yes, if you will invite me."

"Well, if you never go to a wedding until you see the Marquis of Morel and Miss Pauline Birdseye married, then you will never see another one in your life."

"Oh, I hope it will not be as bad as that."

"But, I say, will you have me for one of your bridesmaids when you bestow your precious self upon him?"

"Nonsense! there isn't any likelihood of any such thing happening," responded Virginia, but, despite the denial, a faint blush appeared on her face.

"Well, I don't know about that. As far as he is concerned, 'Barkis is willing,' I guess."

"Oh, I guess the gentleman doesn't care for me," Virginia remarked, carelessly.

"Well, if he doesn't, I'm no judge of mankind, that's all!" Pauline retorted.

"And where did you pick up so much knowledge, pray?" the other asked, quizzically.

"In the school which you never chanced to attend—the school of experience."

"I wasn't born like you, with a silver spoon in my mouth, and with a lot of people around me all anxious to keep everything disagreeable away, so I had a chance to see something of life, and I am not sorry for it, either."

"Now, in regard to this gentleman, I saw, right from the beginning, that he was impressed

with you. I don't mind owning up, Virgie, that if I thought there was the slightest chance for me, I would gladly set my cap for the man, although I can't really say that I have fallen desperately in love with him or anything of that kind, but then, it is not in my nature to fall desperately in love with anybody; I don't know, but I never did yet."

"But, as I started to say, if this marquis, with his title and his fortune, should take it into his head that he couldn't be happy without me, the chances are great that I wouldn't refuse him, because he seems to be a real nice fellow—he's a gentleman and all that, and I don't doubt that if I married him, in time I would learn to love him as well as most women love their husbands."

"Oh, you are dreadful, Pauline!" the other exclaimed. "I couldn't take that view of marriage. It seems like making a mockery out of the holiest of ceremonies."

"Yes, that, of course, is the right way to look at it. I know that as well as you do, but the world don't look at it in that light, and, like many another girl, I suppose if I didn't fairly dislike the man I should be willing to sell myself to him, if I thought it was a good match."

"Oh, no, Pauline, you wouldn't do it!" the other exclaimed. "I know you too well! You may think you would, but when the time came you would not!"

"Now I'm going to confess to you; I was in love once."

"You don't say so! Oh, tell me all about it!"

Pauline moved close to her friend and the two girls twined their arms around each other.

"Yes; and I was only a child—only eight years old, and with a boy fully twice my age, who was like a brother to me."

"Where is he now?"

"I don't know; he ran away to sea, and I have never seen him since; but for a long time I used to dream of him every night, and I always prayed that Heaven would watch over and guard him from harm."

"Tell me, Virgie, which do you like best now; your boy lover or the marquis?"

"Oh, I don't know; if the first one doesn't come back pretty soon I'm afraid there will not be any chance for him."

"She is in the snare of the serpent!" Kate Scott murmured.

CHAPTER XXV.

AN UNEXPECTED ARRIVAL.

THREE days after the one on which the events detailed in our last chapter occurred, Judge Colamore was surprised by an unexpected visitor.

It was about four in the afternoon, and the judge had just arrived from the city.

The carriage which was accustomed to meet him at the railway station had just deposited him at the door of Pine Tree Hall, when he was accosted by a well dressed, distinguished-looking stranger, who had approached the portal of the mansion at the same time.

"Have I the pleasure of addressing Judge Colamore?" the gentleman asked.

There was something familiar about both the stranger's face and voice, and the judge wondered where he had seen him before, for he was unable to remember, and yet he was certain that it was not the first time he had encountered him.

"Yes, sir, that is my name."

"I perceive, judge, that you do not remember me, but that is not strange, for it is some years since we have met, although you have not changed much—in fact, so little that I would be able to recognize you anywhere."

"Oh, your face is familiar to me! You are no stranger, I am sure of that, although I confess I am not able to place you just at present."

"My name is Campbell—James Auchinclose Campbell," the other remarked, with a smile.

"Bless me! so it is! Why, Jim, I am delighted to see you!" and the old judge shook hands with the young man in the warmest manner.

In the past he and the boy had always been great friends; the lawyer had been deeply grieved when the old merchant's arbitrary ways had driven the lad into open revolt, and he had fled from home and friends to seek his fortune among strangers.

"Well, it isn't any wonder that I didn't know you, for you were only a lad of sixteen when I saw you last, and now you are a man."

"Oh, of course I have altered greatly."

"Yes, yes, and a fine, strapping fellow you are, too! Well, Jim, my boy, how has the world used you?"

"Oh, capitally; I haven't any reason to complain," the other replied.

"I went abroad to seek my fortune, and though I cannot boast that I have returned a millionaire, yet I have managed to feather my nest pretty well for a man of my age."

"But now, Jim, my boy, now you have the light of experience, don't you think that you made a mistake in running away as you did?"

"Don't you think you would have done better in the long run if you had stayed quietly at home, and submitted to Mr. Auchinclose's whims, harsh though he was?"

"Indeed I do not!" the young man replied, warmly.

"You have no idea how intolerable was the rule which he exercised over me. He was a petty tyrant of the worst kind. The man is dead and gone, but still I can't help speaking the truth."

"He had a mean spirit, and when he found that I was not disposed to blindly submit, slave-like, to all his caprices, he fixed upon a course of action to break me of my ugliness, as he called it; and the result was that I took French leave one fine day without even taking the trouble to bid him good-by."

"I suppose you know that he left a fortune of five million?"

"Yes, he left it because he couldn't take it with him, for he would certainly have done so if he could," the young man remarked, sarcastically.

"I can remember, as a boy, that he was always worried about his money, and always suspected that every one who came near him had some design on his wealth."

"Yes, he was peculiar in some respects," the judge admitted, and none knew better than the old lawyer how miserably, mean and weak in regard to certain points had been Campbell Auchinclose.

"I suppose you know that Miss Virginia inherited the property?"

"Yes, so I heard; and I was amazed, too, for with the knowledge I possessed of the man, I felt sure he would leave the greater part of his money to some institutions, tied up in such a way that the parties couldn't get the money without making some arrangement to glorify the name of their benefactor."

The old judge smiled; he perceived that although the speaker had been only a lad when he ran away from the stern rule of the five-times millionaire, yet he thoroughly understood the peculiar and selfish traits of the merchant.

"Well, Jim, to tell the truth, I don't believe that Auchinclose intended that the girl should have all his money," Judge Colamore replied.

"I made out the draft of a will for him, and, as you suspect, the bulk of his property was given to institutions, and these institutions were to shed all the glory that they could on the name of Campbell Auchinclose."

"I suppose it was the old story then," the young man remarked.

"He had no idea that death was so near—he thought he had more time, was not in a hurry, and the grim destroyer struck him down before he completed his arrangements."

"Yes, that was about it, I suppose," the judge remarked, after a moment's hesitation.

The thought had passed rapidly through his mind that there wasn't any need of explaining to the young man exactly how the case really was.

"Well, now that you have got back again, Jim, I hope you will take up your quarters here with us."

"As Mr. Auchinclose's executor, and Miss Virginia's guardian, I am in command here, and I assure you that you will be heartily welcome."

"You and Virginia used to be great friends, you know, and I feel sure she will be delighted to see you."

"She was a charming child, and I suppose is a beautiful girl."

"Oh, yes, she is quite a belle."

And just at this point the two young ladies made their appearance in company with Miss Du Burg, the housekeeper.

"Here's an old friend of yours, Virginia!" exclaimed the judge.

The ladies advanced, but the eyes of the young girl were either sharper than the old lawyer's, or else her remembrance was better, for she recognized the new-comer almost immediately.

"Why, it's James Campbell!" she exclaimed, giving her hand in the frankest manner, and a delicate blush crimsoning her cheeks.

Thoughts of the conversation between herself and Miss Birdseye in regard to this gentleman arose in her mind and made her seem a little confused.

"I am glad to see that my old playmate has not forgotten me," the young man said, gazing with admiring eyes upon the beautiful face of the young girl.

"Although I must own that you have changed so greatly that I am afraid I would hardly have been able to recognize you, if I encountered you without knowing who you were."

"Ah, you see then that my memory for absent friends is stronger than yours," said the girl, archly.

"I'm afraid I shall not be able to dispute that statement as strongly as I would like to," Campbell replied.

Then he was introduced to the other two ladies, and the judge explained that he had tendered the hospitalities of Pine Tree Hall to the wanderer.

"And where are you stopping now, by the way?" the judge said in conclusion.

"At the Fifth Avenue Hotel."

"Judge, please have James's baggage sent for immediately," Virginia exclaimed.

The Man of Three.

"You mustn't think, sir, that you can come to New York and stop at any hotel while I am the mistress of a mansion," and she shook her forefinger warningly at the young man.

Campbell bowed.

"When youth and beauty command who would think of disobeying?" he replied, gallantly.

"Write me out an order then for the baggage and I will send for it at once," said Judge Colamore.

The young man complied, and then supplying the servant with money to defray the hotel bill the man departed.

Just at this point the marquis made his appearance, having made an engagement to dine at Pine Tree Hall that day.

The judge was about to introduce the marquis to Campbell, when Morel said, in his smoothest way:

"It is not necessary, judge, I already have the pleasure of Mr. Campbell's acquaintance, having chanced to meet him at the club the other evening."

Campbell responded in a suitable manner, and then the party entered the house, going to the parlor where a general conversation took place until it was interrupted by the summons to the table.

When the dinner was over, all repaired again to the parlor, and then there was music and singing.

In these, of course, the marquis shone to decided advantage, for Campbell could neither play nor sing, not being gifted in these lines.

So while Miss Auchinclose and the marquis busied themselves at the piano—the judge going to sleep in his easy-chair as usual—Miss Birdseye and the housekeeper did their best to entertain Mr. Campbell.

Now this was natural on the part of Pauline, but something out of the common for Miss Du Burg, for she was usually very quiet and reserved, and kept in the background.

But on this occasion she shone with unwonted brilliancy, making Pauline exert herself to at all hold her own.

Miss Birdseye did not know what to make of it.

Had the housekeeper resisted the undoubted fascinations of the marquis to fall in love, head over ears, with James Campbell?

After a couple of hours a stroll in the open air was suggested.

And in the bustle of preparation the housekeeper found occasion to exchange a few words with the marquis unobserved by the others.

CHAPTER XXVI.

A LITTLE PLAIN TALK.

"HAVE a care," the housekeeper said; "this man promises to be a dangerous rival."

By this speech the reader will comprehend that the marquis, in some way, had managed to not only make a friend of the housekeeper, but to enlist her on his side.

"Do you think so?" the marquis replied, in a tone which seemed to question the truth of the statement.

"Oh, yes, I don't think there is the least doubt in regard to the matter. I have been watching both of them intently, in a quiet way, without allowing them to perceive that they were under scrutiny."

"So have I."

"Well, can't you see from the expression upon the man's face that he greatly fancies the girl?"

"Oh, yes, that is plain enough; but it is not so plain that she fancies him."

"You see, I have paid more attention to her than I have to him," the marquis observed, in a sneering sort of way.

"It doesn't matter a particle how he is affected, as long as she is not."

"Do you think you men can read a woman as well as one of her own sex?" the housekeeper demanded.

"No, perhaps not."

"Then, in this matter, trust to my judgment rather than to your own!" Miss Du Burg exclaimed, decidedly.

"I have watched the girl with the eyes of a hawk ever since this man made his appearance."

"Trifles light as air, which a man would never take notice of, cannot escape a woman's eye."

"During the dinner, whenever she thought she was unobserved, her eyes wandered to his face, and there was a soft, peculiar look in them which I never saw there before."

The marquis listened, and a dark look came over his face.

"You are sure that you haven't made any mistake about this?" he asked.

"Oh, yes, I am."

"In some cases of this kind the imagination exerts a powerful influence over the eyes," he suggested.

"Yes, but I am not one of the kind to allow my imagination to run away with me. I tell you there isn't any mistake about it, as you will discover in time."

"Why, even when you were at the piano with her, she could not help turning around every now and then to snatch a glimpse of him."

"That was when she spoke to Miss Birdseye."

"That was but an excuse to be able to look at him. Then, too, when I was laughing and bantering the man, every once in a while a slight shade would pass over her face, as though she did not like it."

"Ah, yes, I see; I wondered what you were up to at the time," the marquis remarked. "For I know you never bother yourself to display your undoubted talents—to show how really brilliant you can be—unless there is something to be gained by it."

"My idea was to arouse her jealousy—to see if she minded his joking and laughing with another woman."

"Yes, yes, I see; a glorious idea, and one worthy the brain of such a woman as you are."

"If she did not care for the man, why, of course, it would not make any difference to her whether he had a good time with another woman or not, but if she liked him, or had any idea of falling in love with him, then most surely she would be annoyed, and being annoyed, could hardly help showing it."

"And she did show it, you think?" the marquis asked, evidently anxious.

"Most decidedly, though not to a great extent, but still enough to enable me to see that she did not relish my being on such familiar terms with the gentleman, and yet, at the time, mark you! she was enjoying the pleasure of your society."

"I see, I see, and it certainly does look as if his appearance here bodes no good to me. And then, apart from Miss Virginia, I have a feeling that the fellow and I are much more likely to be enemies than friends."

"What difference does that make, anyway? But to return to the subject of the girl."

"In my belief she doesn't as yet know her own mind; she is wavering between you two; she doesn't know which one of you she likes best, and a trifle now may turn the scale in either direction."

"Something must be done then, and speedily, too, for there isn't any time to lose," the marquis remarked, decidedly.

"Yes, you must act, and act promptly. You said a moment ago that you and this stranger were much more likely to be enemies than friends."

"The statement is correct, too, for the moment we encountered each other I am sure an instinctive aversion sprung up."

"The man is in your way—he is your enemy—under such circumstances what is to be done?"

"Remove him!" hissed the marquis, between his clinched teeth.

"Right, but the question is, how can it be done?" the housekeeper asked, thoughtfully.

"If we were in Europe now—in France, for instance—the question could be easily answered."

"You would manage to quarrel with the man, and either challenge or force him to challenge you?"

"Exactly, and as I am an expert with either swords or pistols, there would be but little doubt in regard to the result."

"And cannot the same scheme be worked here?"

"It is doubtful," the marquis replied, with a shake of the head. "These Americans are cold-blooded, worse even than the English John Bulls, and they do not take kindly to the duello."

"But according to the account he gives of himself, this man has passed a portion of his life in foreign lands, and it may be possible he has become a convert to the doctrine that the proper way for a gentleman to avenge an insult is by a meeting upon the field of honor."

"I hope to heaven he has, for it would greatly simplify matters," the marquis exclaimed.

"It is worth the trial, at any rate," Miss Du Burg suggested.

"You are right there, and I will make it."

During this conversation the marquis had been assisting the housekeeper to put on her wrap.

The party had been delayed by the inability of Miss Pauline to find her gloves, which she declared she had dropped somewhere in the hall.

The gloves were found at last, and out into the open air—into the bright moonlight—the party issued.

A trip to the beach, to observe the play of the moonbeams upon the water, was suggested, and so down to the Point they went.

The trip was an uneventful one, and after an hour or so the party returned to the mansion.

The marquis had been cudgeling his brains to find a pretext for quarreling with Campbell, for, of course, it would never do to allow him to know that the fear he would prove to be a successful rival was at the bottom of the matter.

Then to his mind—happening to recur to the eventful night in the club-room, when so heavy a game had been played—an idea came—a sensible one, which, carried out, would render it an

easy matter for him to quarrel with James Campbell, and yet not allow either Campbell himself or anybody else to suspect his true reasons for proceeding in the matter.

Determined to lose no time, he took an opportunity to say quietly to Campbell that he would like an opportunity to speak to him in private.

"Certainly," Campbell replied. "After we reach the house, and the ladies go in, I will volunteer to walk down the road a little way with you and smoke a cigar, then you can deliver your communication with the assurance that it will be as private as you please."

"That will do admirably," the marquis replied.

The programme was carried out as arranged.

When the marquis took his departure Campbell announced that he would walk a little way with him for the purpose of enjoying a cigar, and the two left the mansion in company.

The pair walked along in silence until they were well away from Pine Tree Hall.

The moon was at its full, riding high in the heavens, and almost all objects were as plainly visible as by day.

Campbell appeared perfectly at his ease, and as the marquis gazed at his calm and handsome face, he saw that it was evident the other could have no suspicions in regard to what was coming.

And now that he was face to face with the task it did not seem to be as easy as it had appeared when the idea of the project first came to him.

But he was not the kind of man to turn back, though, when he had once put his hand to the wheel.

So, after in a measure breaking the ice by remarking that it was a "splendid night," to which Campbell readily assented, the marquis came at once to the business in hand by stating:

"What I am about to say to you is not the most pleasant thing in the world."

"In that case then I would get it off my mind as soon as possible," the other rejoined, in the coolest and most unconcerned way.

"Your presence in this mansion—I refer to Pine Tree Hall—was a considerable surprise to me," the marquis remarked.

"I can assure you that you could not be more surprised at meeting me, in the Auchinclose mansion than I was to encounter you there."

This statement, being entirely unexpected, bothered the marquis for a moment, for he couldn't imagine what the other was driving at.

"I don't know why you should be surprised," the marquis retorted.

"The judge acts as my legal adviser, and through him I made Miss Auchinclose's acquaintance."

"That was natural, of course; Judge Colamore, though an able and experienced man of the world, is liable to be deceived, and you have played your part so well that he has no suspicion of what a rascal you are."

CHAPTER XXVII.

CAMPBELL SHOWS FIGHT.

The marquis came to an abrupt halt, completely astonished by these unexpected words.

"What do you mean, sir, by such language?" he demanded, his face dark with passion, and his voice hoarse with suppressed rage.

He had been perplexing his mind in regard to how he should manage to pick a quarrel with the young man, and now, lo! and behold! Campbell was giving him a most excellent opportunity—more than meeting him half-way.

"I should think my meaning ought to be perfectly plain," Campbell retorted. "I couldn't speak much plainer or more to the point."

"I said as distinctly as I could put it in words, that Judge Colamore would never have had anything to do with you if he had known what a rascal you are."

The marquis burst into a loud and contemptuous laugh.

"Oh, this is really too ridiculous!" he cried.

"Yes, that is my opinion exactly, and how on earth you ever had the impudence to humbug Judge Colamore into the belief that you were one of the European nobility is really a mystery."

"Oh, I am not a marquis, then?" the other exclaimed, in accents of lofty scorn.

"No more than I am!" was the prompt and rather unexpected reply.

"Ah, is that possible?" cried the marquis, so enraged by this unlooked-for turn of affairs, that, despite his great natural assurance, he was really at a loss for words.

In the language of the sporting men, the coolness and audacity of the other had "rattled" him.

"Quite possible! Not the least bit of doubt about it!" Campbell asserted, in the coolest and most positive manner.

"And what am I, then?"

"As impudent and unblushing a scoundrel as I ever encountered!" Campbell declared. "And mind you, I have been a pretty extensive traveler, and in my time have encountered some superior rascals."

The two men had halted during this dis-

cussion, and stood facing each other, only about a yard apart.

When this direct accusation fell upon the ears of the marquis, his face became white with rage.

"You insolent reptile, how dare you insult a gentleman like myself?" he cried, and he drew back his right hand with a threatening gesture, as though he intended to strike the other.

"Now if you will take my advice, you will not try that game!" Campbell exclaimed, facing the marquis, perfectly cool and collected, yet with a gleam of fire in his clear eyes.

"If it comes to a personal encounter, you are no match for me!

"I am fully fifty pounds heavier than you are—larger and stronger in every way, and then the sailor life which I led for years has made my muscles like iron, to say nothing of the fact that I am an experienced boxer."

Youth, too, is on my side, for you are no chicken, although you hold your own remarkably well, and don't look to be within fifteen or sixteen years as old as you are, but when it comes to a question of a personal encounter, you will find that your age will tell terribly against you, and the chances are a hundred to one that if you attempted to insult me with a blow, inside of five minutes you would be about as badly a whipped man as was ever seen in these latitudes."

The marquis threw up his hand with a gesture of contempt.

"I am not a fisticuff fighter!" he exclaimed, loftily.

His sudden change of front was due to the fact that, angry as he was, his rage did not prevent him from seeing that every word uttered by the other was true.

In a personal encounter he did not stand any chance when opposed to a man so much his superior in every way, and, most undoubtedly, he would have received a terrible thrashing if he was unwise enough to disregard the warning and force an encounter.

"Well, in this case it is lucky for you that you are not," Campbell observed, with perfect frankness.

"I am a gentleman, sir, and with indignation I repel your accusation."

"But it is true, all the same."

"I understand your game now, sir," the marquis continued. "A guilty conscience has warned you of what I was about to say to you, and you have indulged in this tirade for the purpose of breaking the force of my accusation."

"Now, really, to use the slang of the streets, you are away 'off,'" Campbell replied.

"I anticipated that your communication would not be couched in a friendly spirit, for, naturally, you would much rather I was out of Pine Tree Hall than in it, but as to the particular nature of what you intended to say I am entirely in the dark."

"You are quite right in surmising that my communication was in regard to your presence in the Auchinclose mansion.

"The other night, when we met at the club-house, I took your measure and detected what kind of a man you were, but, under the circumstances, I did not think that it was worth while for me to expose you then, but I cannot permit you to be received on a familiar footing in the Auchinclose mansion."

Campbell appeared surprised, and he looked inquisitively at the marquis for a moment.

"Well, now, may I be hanged if you ain't too much for me," he exclaimed. "I can't make out what you are driving at now."

"Why, man, I know your real character!" the other exclaimed, sternly. "These people here knew you only as a boy, and of course it is not possible for them to know that you went to the bad as you grew up."

"Oh, I did, did I?" exclaimed Campbell, apparently more astonished than enraged at the declaration.

"Yes, you know it is the truth, and I detected it the other night in the club-house, where you owed the success which attended your card-playing more to the fact that you were able to manipulate the pasteboards in a skillful manner than to either skill at the game or good luck."

"To put it in plain words you mean to say that I am a card-sharper?"

"Exactly, and that is precisely what you are."

The declaration seemed to amuse Campbell, for he laughed as though he regarded the matter in the light of a joke.

"Let me see," he observed, in a reflective sort of way. "It is a very old device on the part of the rogue who is detected stealing to raise the cry of stop thief, in order to divert suspicion from himself."

"Now, then, with that sort of instinct, which a man like yourself must possess to a high degree, or else he would not be able to get on at all, you knew the very moment you were introduced to me, that I was a man who would be apt to detect the absurdity of your pretensions—who would be pretty certain to guess that instead of being a foreign nobleman you were nothing but a mere adventurer, depending upon your wits for a living."

"You felt it in your bones, as the saying is, that the time would come when I would denounce you, and you determined to get a lead by denouncing me, but, my dear fellow, that chicken will not fight! The game will not work, clever as the idea may seem to you."

"Ah, and that is your opinion?" the other inquired, contemptuously.

"It is, and let me tell you that I suspected you from the beginning," Campbell replied.

"I had the chance once to become well acquainted with just such another man as yourself in Europe. He was a clever, accomplished fellow, and succeeded in deceiving everybody for a time, but it was the old story of the pitcher going too often to the well; success made him bold and reckless, and at last an exposure came."

"Now, then, when I encountered you I thought of this other bold and clever rascal in a moment. You gentlemen adventurers are all pretty much alike, I take it; at any rate, there is a great family resemblance between you, and so, during the time we were at the card-table, I watched you as carefully as I could without betraying to the others that I had my eyes on you."

"Well, sir, you did not detect any trickery on my part?"

"Oh, no, it was the old story—the well-known fact which makes the conjurer's operations possible; a man's hands, when well trained, are quicker than a man's eyes. But you cheated outrageously, all the same; for if you hadn't, you never would have been able to win twelve or thirteen thousand dollars as you did, and that is how you managed to get hold of the money to pay for this country place which you purchased."

Despite the marquis's command over himself it was as much as he could do to keep from wincing at this well-aimed shot.

"The statement is a ridiculous one!" he exclaimed. "And as for your insinuation that I am not what I represent myself to be, it is too absurd to be worthy of notice; yet, at the same time, it is an insult which I cannot allow to pass unheeded."

"If we were in Europe now, I should know how to act."

"What is there to prevent you from acting here exactly the same as if you were there?"

"If we were in Europe, I should take occasion to put an insult upon you in so public a manner that the force of opinion would compel you to take some notice of it."

"You are hinting at a duel?"

"I am."

"According to the laws of the case a gentleman is not obliged to go out with a rascal, but I will waive that. We will make believe that we are in Europe, so you can go ahead as soon as you like!"

"You will accept a challenge from me, then?"

"I will."

"I trust you will not name some barbarous weapon, as I have heard is the custom sometimes, in this country."

"Swords are good enough for me."

"A gentleman's weapon!" the marquis observed.

"Well, sir, to-morrow you will hear from me, and now I will bid you adieu."

And thus they parted.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE REPORT.

The engagement of the young Englishman, Jerry Benjamins, or Leg-of-Mutton, to give him the nickname by which he was far better known among his pals than by his real appellation, was a great relief to both the coachman and hostler attached to Pine Tree Hall.

Neither one of these worthies was willing to do any work that they could possibly avoid, and as the new-comer seemed anxious to attend to anything which he could possibly manage, the result was that the pair threw all of their work, which they could, upon the shoulders of the other, so they had a deal more time to themselves than before the new-comer's arrival.

Before the coming of Leg-of-Mutton, the German valet had been accustomed to spend a great part of his time smoking in the neighborhood of the stables, on account of the objection that the female servants made to his pipe.

But after Benjamin's arrival, Carl made the discovery that there was an old summer-house at the end of the garden, where he could smoke without interfering with anybody, so he seldom visited the stables now.

The reader, who is in the secret—who knows that the German valet, Carl, was Joe Phenix in disguise, and that Leg-of-Mutton was a spy whom he had introduced upon the premises—will understand that this change of operations was for the purpose of preventing anybody from suspecting that there was any communication between Phenix and the new-comer.

If the parties in Pine Tree Hall, whom he was watching, got a suspicion that Leg-of-Mutton was a spy, it would put an end to his usefulness, so Joe Phenix took all possible precautions to prevent the fact from being known.

Of course, it was necessary for him to com-

municate with Leg-of-Mutton so that he might receive any reports that the other had to make, and Joe Phenix arranged the matter so that no one would be apt to discover the meetings.

Directly in the rear of the old summer-house of which we have spoken was a dense cluster of lilac bushes which had grown up there unheeded by the gardener, and the bushes were in such a position that any one approaching them in the rear was sheltered from the view of anybody who chanced to be in the neighborhood of the house or stables.

Therefore it was an extremely simple matter for Leg-of-Mutton, after Joe Phenix had taken up his position in the summer-house, to steal out of the back door of the stable, taking particular care that no one was around to notice his exit, take a roundabout course through the bushes, tall weeds, and small trees which thickly fringed the boundary line of the Pine Tree Hall grounds, and then fetch up in the rear of the summer-house in the midst of the clump of lilac bushes.

The bushes concealed him from view, and it was an easy matter to hold a conversation with Joe Phenix, sitting in the summer-house, puffing away at his pipe, without any one being the wiser for it.

The detective was in the summer-house, and Leg-of-Mutton had just taken up his position in the lilac bushes when we introduce the pair to our reader's notice.

"'Ere I am, guv'nor," quoth Leg-of-Mutton, after he had assumed a comfortable position close to the summer-house, sitting upon an old keg, which had been tossed in amid the bushes for the sake of getting it out of the way.

"Yes, I heard you coming; any news?"

"Oh, yes, lots."

"Go ahead!"

"I was on the water last night, guv'nor, and the fu'st thing I knows that long-legged chap skips out."

"I was on the other side of the way from the porter's lodge, a-snuggled down in the bushes."

"A capital hiding-place, and from it you would be able to see everybody who entered or left the grounds."

"That war jest my idee."

"Well, the long-legged chap didn't take the road leading to town, but went the other way, toward the water."

"Pretty soon out came a lady—you know who—and the dame didn't take either the road to town or the road to the water, but the other one, which runs down to the point."

"Toward the De Jones place?"

"Right you are, guv'nor; and she walked along, you know, as if she was only out for the air."

"I see."

"I spicioned that it might pay for to watch the dame, so I follered on arter her."

"That was right," Phenix observed, approvingly.

"Jist before you come to the De Jones place, you know, there's a little shanty stands right by the road, on the opposite side of the street."

"Yes, a small, deserted house with the windows covered with boards, and tightly nailed."

"And the doors, too; that's for to keep the tramps from gitting in and using it as a lodging-house. I know, 'cos I was a-going to bunk in there the night I went for to crack this crib, and couldn't do the trick."

"I presume it was for that object that the doors and windows were nailed up so tightly."

"Well, guv'nor, the dame passed 'round the corner of that shanty, quitting the road, and as I was on that side of the street, I jest made a big circle 'round the house—keeping well away, you know, so that my game couldn't be twigged—jest so as to see what the dame was at."

Joe Phenix was deeply interested, for he realized that this information was important.

"Well, what did you discover?"

"Nothing at all, as I'm a sinner!" Leg-of-Mutton declared.

"Is it possible?" Phenix exclaimed, astonished.

"As true as that I am here in these 'ere bushes, guv'nor!" Leg-of-Mutton replied.

"There's a lot of little trees 'round the back of the shanty, you know, and when I got where I could get a tolerable clear sight, the dame wasn't nowhere to be seen."

"She must have entered the house."

"That is what I thought, and so I jest snooped down, like a blessed rabbit, and waited."

"Well, I guess I was a-crouching there 'bout ten minutes when I heard footsteps on the road—to the westward of the house, mind you—and they were going west, too; yet I'm ready to take my 'davy that whoever it was didn't pass along the road to the eastward of the house."

"They must have come from the house."

"Well, now, guv'nor, that was 'bout the size of the idee that struck me! Anyhow, I made up my mind that I ought to see who they were, and what they were up to, so I follered on their track."

"A good move!" the detective exclaimed.

"In course I did my level best to keep 'em from knowing they were being watched."

"Pretty soon they came to an open space so I could catch a good look at 'em—there were two on 'em, and, would you believe it, guv'nor, neither one was the dame."

"Is it possible?"

"Sure as shooting! There was a good-sized feller with a black beard, and a little chap, not much more than a boy, you know."

"Yes, yes, I see," remarked Joe Phenix, reflectively. "The little fellow was probably the woman in disguise."

"That was the way I thought the cat jumped, guv'nor. They went on, and I followed. They took the road leading to the water, and a little ways down the road the long-legged chap was waiting for 'em, and then all three went on together."

"I was arter 'em jest like a bloodhound, you know, but keeping a good ways in the rear, so they couldn't get onto me."

"Down on the shore is an old house, and when the party came near it a couple of dogs barked; then a stout, thick set chap came out, and all went into the shanty together."

"I tried for to sly up, so as for to see what the gang were up to, but the beastly dogs kicked up such a row that a couple of the coves came out to see what the matter was, and I had to run for dear life, and on account of the blarsted dogs I had to keep away off."

"But when they departed from the house, you could have tracked them," Joe Phenix suggested.

"Well, now, guv'nor, that was jest my little game," Leg-of-Mutton declared.

"But I tell yer, these blokes are reg'lar high-toby chaps! They didn't go back the way they came, for I waited until after midnight, and nary one on 'em came; then I got onto the dodge which they had played."

"The dogs kinder put the idea into their heads that there was somebody spying in the neighborhood, and when they quit the house they went away by water."

"Ah, yes, I see; a shrewd dodge!"

"And in course it threw me off the track, for the blarsted dogs kept me so far away from the house that I wasn't able to tumble to the trick."

"Is that all?"

"Yes, guv'nor."

"You have done well, and given me a clew which I think will pay to follow up."

"Keep your eyes open, don't miss a chance, and above all things, try and avoid discovery, for if the rogues detect that you are on the watch, your usefulness would be ended."

"Oh, I'm fly! Don't be afraid, guv'nor, but what I will keep my eyes open."

And here the conference ended.

Turn we now our attention to Old Monkey and his doings down in the old house on the shore.

It was in the afternoon of the same day that this conversation took place, and the masquerading ruffian was seated on the stern seat of one of his boats, which was drawn up on the shore, smoking a pipe, when there came in sight an old man, evidently a tramp, who was about as miserable-looking as could well be imagined.

His clothes would have disgraced a scarecrow, and although he appeared to have once been a big and powerful fellow, he was now bent almost double by age and sickness.

CHAPTER XXIX.

OLD MONKEY IS ASTONISHED.

THE cracksmen viewed the approach of the stranger with evident disfavor.

"What in blazes does that old scarecrow want here, I wonder?" he growled.

The old tramp hobbled up to within a few yards of where Old Monkey sat, and proceeded to make himself comfortable by taking a seat upon a lobster-pot.

"How are ye, mate?" said the stranger, in a wheezy, husky voice, which seemed to indicate that its owner in his time had disposed of a large quantity of bad liquor.

"What do you want here?" Old Monkey growled, not disposed to waste either time or words upon so unpromising a visitor.

"Nothin' much—jes' travelin' round fur to see what's up."

"Well, you had better travel out of this as quick as the Lord will let ye!" Old Monkey exclaimed, in an extremely threatening manner.

"W'ot's the matter with you? Who trod on yer, anyway?" demanded the old tramp, angrily.

"You will find that some one will tread on you, if you don't stir your stumps and get out of this!" the other retorted.

"Hey! you are talking mighty big now, I reckon!" exclaimed the stranger in a tone of contempt.

"I'll bet four dollars and a half that you don't know who I am."

"No, and I don't want to know, either!" Old Monkey cried.

"I'm a gen'leman, I am!"

"Oh, yes, you look like it!"

"And I'm a ba-ad man if anybody tries to crowd me!" the stranger declared in an extremely threatening way.

"Yes, yes, you're a tearer, you are, but you want to stir your stumps and get out of here now before you get hurt."

"And who'll hurt me?" asked the old man, with an assumption of great dignity.

"I will, unless you travel out of here mighty quick."

"Say, do you live in this house here?"

"Yes, I do."

"Reckon you think you own a heap?"

"You will find that I own a good, hard fist, if you don't get out!"

"Say! I've been 'round these here diggin's a durned sight longer than you have, and I reckon that you hasn't got no call to try and boss me even if you do live in this 'ere shanty!"

"I used for to own 'bout all this place onc't."

"I don't care if you used for to own the whole of New York!" Old Monkey retorted.

"I ain't a-going to have any sich scarecrow as you haug 'round my place!"

"Now, I give you fair warning to get up and get out! Do you see those dogs there?"

The terriers were chained near the house. Old Monkey made a practice of keeping the dogs tied up in the daytime, thinking that by so doing they were made more savage and watchful at night.

"Oh, yes, I see the dogs," the old man replied, slowly, glancing at the beasts as he spoke with the eye of a man who was a judge in such matters.

"Them is good dorgs too; I shouldn't wonder if they were pretty fair ratters."

"Dorgs like them dorgs ought to be worth fifteen or twenty dollars apiece."

"Say, old pal, where did you steal them beasts, an' are you holdin' onto 'em for to get a big reward?"

Old Monkey was in a bad humor to-day, and in no mood to relish any playful joking of this kind.

"Now, see here, I mean business and I don't want any foolishness!" he declared. "And if you don't hop up and hop out of this lively, it will be the worse for you!"

The man had reason for his ill-humor.

That morning, his mind recurring to the events of the previous night, he had taken the trouble to make an examination of the ground for a considerable distance around the spot where the dogs had kicked up such a disturbance, and his search had been rewarded by the discovery of some footprints in the soft ground, which he felt sure, from their position, had been made by some man attempting to spy around the premises, and his scrutiny had been interrupted by the dogs, who had driven the intruder away.

That any spy should be able so soon to get upon the track of the gang was an omen of evil, and the more Old Monkey reflected upon the matter, the more disturbed he became in his mind in regard to it.

He regarded the discovery as being a particularly important one, and if it had been possible he would have immediately acquainted his associates with what he had discovered, but as he could not communicate with the others without great risk of discovery during the daytime, he judged that no material harm would be done if he waited until nightfall, when he would be able to get at them without much risk of anybody knowing anything about the matter.

The man had brooded over the affair until his anger had been thoroughly aroused, and the old tramp happened along just in time to give him a chance to vent some of his spleen.

"Hop!" cried the old man, with an expression of supreme contempt on his discolored features, "well, now, I guess you kin let your bottom dollar that you won't fit no hop out of your uncle! Bless yer soul! I ain't done no hopping for twenty years, and I reckon I ain't a-goin' to commence now!"

"Well, you will hop, and mighty sudden, too!" cried Old Monkey, rising to his feet, out of patience with the old man.

"Look a-here! w'ot are you about?" cried the tramp, evidently alarmed by the threatening movement of the other.

"What am I about? Well, you will soon find out, I reckon!" Old Monkey cried, savagely, doubling up his fist and shaking it in a menacing way at the other.

"You had better be keerful w'ot you do!" piped the old tramp, in his husky, discordant voice.

"I'm a ba-ad man, I am, an' I gi'n you fair warnin'! You had better not tackle me, if you ain't ready to go down inter yer grave!"

"Bah!" cried the ruffian, in contempt, "I'll give you such a pounding as you haven't had for a dog's age!"

"If you lay yer hand on me, you'll be sorry for it, I tell you now!" the old tramp exclaimed.

But, strange fact, although he seemed to be frightened by the threatening movements of the other, yet he was obstinately determined to remain.

"Will you get out of here?"

"No, I won't! This 'ere is a free country, and you ain't got no right for to go to drive me off."

"This 'ere is my home, and this home is my home, and I want you to git, and I don't want no more trouble with ye, either!"

"I ain't leavin'! I jis' can't understand for to make a right out of this!" the old man declared.

"You have got to baill a ferl, 'pending to

law, an' put it around yer grounds! I reckon I know what I am talkin' 'bout! You had better be keerful, or you will git yourself inter a heap of trouble!" the old man warned, apparently determined to hold his ground.

"For the last time, will you get out?" Old Monkey said, approaching near enough to the other to be able to take hold of him.

"Don't you put your hands on me or I will take the law on yer!" the bummer cried.

Old Monkey seized the man by the coat-collar and yanked him to his feet.

"You durned old beat!" the ruffian cried. "I will jest boot you now until you are sick and sore. I'll teach you to be civil the next time when you are axed to cut your lucky!"

But despite his apparent age and infirmity the old tramp was plucky, and at once closed in with his assailant.

The ruffian was amazed at the courage of the other, for he had fancied that the moment he had put his hands upon the man the tramp would "weaken," to use the cant term, and beg for mercy.

That the fellow would attempt to show fight never once occurred to him.

But the tramp was showing fight, and in an extremely vigorous manner too.

The moment that Old Monkey grasped him by the collar and pulled him to his feet, he made a dive with both hands at the throat of his assailant, and gripped Old Monkey so firmly that the latter was not able to shake him off, and the two were so close together that the ruffian was not able to deliver any effective blows.

Vainly Old Monkey struggled: the tramp stuck to him like a leech. The ruffian's breath came harder and harder, for he was being strangled into insensibility.

Weaker and weaker he grew—his head swam around, a mist gathered before his eyes, and then, down he went—the tramp still clinging to him—unconscious.

CHAPTER XXX.

AN INVESTIGATION.

THE struggle only lasted a few seconds, for, despite the fact that the old tramp looked like a man with one foot in the grave, more fit for a sick bed than to engage in a desperate fight, yet, from the time that he fastened his hands upon Old Monkey's throat, he never relaxed the vice-like grip until his antagonist was helpless upon the ground.

During the fight the two terriers had almost gone mad in their endeavors to break their chains, so as to be able to take part in the struggle.

The little brutes seemed to understand that their master was getting pretty badly handled.

They barked and they howled, and, finally, when the old tramp bore their master over backward their fury knew no bounds.

"Shut up your noise!" cried the tramp, rising to a kneeling position beside his victim.

"The infernal brutes will raise the neighborhood, and I am not anxious for any interference just now."

But the dogs kept on barking.

The sagacious brutes knew that there was something wrong, and as they could not get at the man who had treated their master so badly, they did their best to protest, dog-fashion, their disgust at the way their master had been served.

The old tramp cast a glance around and then an idea appeared to strike him.

It was plain that neither by threats or entreaties could he stop the barking of the dogs, but he had thought of a way to still their howls.

He stooped, and, with a strength that no one would believe could have dwelt in his aged frame, picked up his senseless antagonist, threw him over his shoulder, and carried him into the house.

This action caused a fresh chorus of barks and howls to come from the dogs, but after the old tramp disappeared with his burden inside of the shanty the animals gradually cooled down, their shrill yelps turning into low growls, as though they still had a suspicion that all was not right, although there was nothing in sight for them to bark at.

When he got within the house the tramp placed the insensible man upon the rude bunk.

"Desperate diseases require desperate remedies!" the victor muttered, as though seeking to justify the course which he had taken.

And then he immediately proceeded to search the person of his victim.

The find was not positively valuable.

Old Monkey's pocketbook only contained five or six dollars, and the wallet, with a common jackknife, a handkerchief and a bunch of keys, were all that he had in his pockets.

"No letters—not a scrap of writing to serve as a clew," the searcher muttered.

Then he discovered a small, secret sort of pocket on the inside of the coat.

It was so arranged that the entrance to it looked like a fold in the lining of the coat.

From this secret pocket the tramp drew forth a steel "jimmy," so constructed that it could be folded into a small compass-like form; this instrument is the burglar's favorite tool, and is used like a crowbar for forcing open doors and windows, so as to afford an entrance into the

house or store which the cracksman desires to plunder.

"A very neat little tool!" the old tramp exclaimed, surveying it with evident admiration, "and just the kind of plaything that I expected to find on the person of this *honest* fisherman."

Another investigation of the pocket resulted in the production of a most ingeniously contrived folding "brace," and with the brace were a couple of bits, small, and made of the finest kind of steel.

The inspector surveyed these delicate instruments with fully as much admiration as he had bestowed upon the "jimmy."

"Upon my word!" he exclaimed, "this beats anything of the sort that I have ever seen, and I have handled a great many tools of this kind in my time."

"I shouldn't be surprised if these bits are good enough to go through an iron plate; so, even if a lock was guarded by a sheet of iron, it would not bother a gentleman of this kind much if he was provided with such tools as these."

A further investigation revealed a finely-tempered saw, also arranged to double up, so as to be easily carried.

"Oh, this fellow is 'way at the top of the heap and no mistake!" the searcher exclaimed, in a tone of conviction.

"But though these things show distinctly what the man is—a high-toby cracksman of the first degree—yet they give me not the clew I seek."

Of course, by this time, I presume the reader has penetrated the disguise of the tramp, and suspected that the man who had so promptly choked Old Monkey into insensibility was the determined and able sleuth-hound of the law, Joe Phenix.

This was one of the kind of adventures in which Joe Phenix delighted—one which no ordinary detective would think of undertaking.

"Since this little secret pocket has panned out so well, let me see if there isn't another one somewhere in the coat," the bloodhound murmured.

And then he examined the garment more closely.

He was right in his conjecture.

There was another pocket on the other side, but it was quite a small one, and only contained a bunch of skeleton keys; the experienced eyes of the old detective immediately saw that, like the other tools so necessary to the expert cracksman, they were of the finest possible workmanship.

"Oh, these beat anything of the kind I have ever seen!" Joe Phenix exclaimed; "and they prove conclusively that this fellow is a first class workman, for no one but a man who was away up at the top of the ladder would have such tools as these; but, as I said before, these things don't give me any clew."

"I suspected that this man was a crook, and these tools confirm my suspicion, but that is all the good they do."

"There isn't anything here to connect the man with the gang on whose track I am trying to get."

Then Joe Phenix bent over the senseless man, who was now beginning to show some signs of life, and took a good look at him.

Old Monkey had not disguised himself in any way—being a stranger, he did not consider it necessary—so the detective was able to see him exactly as he was.

After a moment's inspection, Joe Phenix shook his head.

"No, I don't know him," he murmured. "He is a stranger to me. What is he, then? Some Western or Californian crook?"

"No, no!" he exclaimed, after a moment's pause, shaking his head.

"These tools were never made in this country; this is some fellow from across the water."

"By Jove!" he exclaimed abruptly, as the thought came to him, "the chances are big that all the gang are strangers, and as they work their game in an entirely different manner from our American crooks, a different course to entrap them must be pursued."

Then, seeing that Old Monkey was beginning to recover his senses, Joe Phenix hastened to restore the articles to their former places, and as he did so, a latch-key on the ring attracted his attention.

"If this should happen to be the latch-key belonging to the clairvoyant's house, it would show that I am on the right track and that this fellow is one of the gang."

Then he quickly detached the key from the ring and put it into his pocket, replacing the others.

"Now, then, I must be off, for there's nothing more for me to do here; there isn't anything to be gained by remaining, for it is important that the fellow shouldn't suspect the purpose which brought me here."

And with these words Joe Phenix hurried from the house, closing the door just as Old Monkey opened his eyes and stared vacantly up at the ceiling.

The dogs saluted the disguised detective with a chorus of barks, but Joe Phenix heeded them not.

Hurrying along the shore, he made his way in double-quick time to a little strip of woodland,

about a thousand yards distant, and when he entered, the trees hid his figure from the sight of the watchful beasts, and their barking ceased.

Joe Phenix gained the woodland before Old Monkey recovered his senses sufficiently to understand what was going on around him, and by the time he gathered strength to sit up the dogs had quieted down.

The cracksman, as he sat on the edge of the bunk and gazed around him was about as astonished and disgusted as a man could well be.

He felt weak and sick, which was not wonderful, considering the terrible choking he had received from the steel-muscled detective.

"What in blazes possessed the old tramp to choke me in that way?" he muttered, as soon as he recovered strength enough to be able to speak, "and how did he ever do it?"

And as he spoke, he moved his head uneasily from side to side, his neck stiffened by the ill-usage it had received.

"What in blazes does it mean?" he continued. "I was like a child in his hands, and how the deuce did I get in here?" he exclaimed, as the thought suddenly came into his mind.

"I suppose I must have had sense enough to crawl in when the fellow let go of me, though I don't remember anything about it."

Then an idea occurred to him.

"Did the scoundrel go through me?"

But to Old Monkey's great relief, an examination proved that his valuables were safe; the latch-key he never missed.

"It won't be healthy for that fellow to come 'round here again!" he declared. "If he does I'll lay him out with a club!"

It will be perceived that even this shrewd and able cracksman had no idea that he had been "interviewed" by a detective.

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE HOSTILE MEETING.

THE Marquis of Morel had been proposed as a member of the Star Club, and, thanks to the influence of Barry Livingstone, had been elected, so he made the club-house his lounging-place when in the city.

And as James Campbell had been introduced there, and had a visitor's privilege, he usually dropped in there every now and then.

On the morning which followed the night when the interview between the Marquis of Morel and James Campbell occurred, as detailed in one of the preceding chapters, the marquis made his appearance at the club-house just about noon, and the first man he encountered after entering was Barry Livingstone.

"Ah, marquis, my dear boy, you are just in time!" the young New Yorker exclaimed.

"That is fortunate—it is always pleasant to be just in time; but just in time for what, may I ask?"

"To take breakfast with me."

The marquis laughed.

"Old fellow, isn't this a rather late hour for breakfasting?"

"Well, you can call it lunch if you like, but it will be my breakfast."

"Why are you so late?"

"Just got up, dear boy!" the other replied, with a grimace. "We were at it again last night, you know; sat down about eleven and got through at six; saw the sun rise, you know, and it isn't very often that any of the fellows of our set enjoy that pleasure except under some circumstance of this kind."

"Ah, yes, I see; well, I wish I had been with you, but I had an invitation to dine with Judge Colamore, and so I spent the evening at Pine Tree Hall."

"And in delightful society, of course," observed Barry Livingstone, with a knowing smile.

"Miss Auchinclose is decidedly *the belle* of the year; and, by the way, I have heard sly reports that you are pretty hard hit in that quarter. Is that true, my dear fellow?"

"Oh, no; the lady and myself are barely acquainted."

"Come, come, now, that will not do!" and the young New Yorker shook his head sagaciously.

"It don't take years, you know, or even months or weeks, for people to fall in love with each other."

"By Jove! my dear fellow, I know in my own case, on three or four occasions, I have fallen over head and ears in love with a beautiful damsel at first sight."

"You remember what the poet says:

"Love is not a flower which takes time to grow,
But springs to perfection in a single night."

"Deuced lot of truth in that, too, dear boy, I think."

"Possibly; but really, in this case, in regard to Miss Auchinclose and myself—"

"I am somewhat too previous, eh? Oh, well, people will talk, you know."

"But, joking aside, old fellow, that girl is a glorious creature, and would be a great catch for any man, even if she wasn't worth a penny; but when you consider that she will bring her husband the snug little sum of about five millions of dollars, you must admit that she would be worth the wooing, even if she wasn't the divine creature that she is."

"Oh, there isn't any doubt about that!"

"But come, let's go in for something to eat, for I really have quite an appetite."

This suited the marquis's purpose, for at the table he would be able to explain what he wanted, for he had come to the club for the express purpose of meeting Barry Livingstone.

The repast was ordered, and the two paid due attention to it, and after their hunger was partly satisfied the marquis proceeded to unfold his business.

"I am in a little difficulty, my dear Livingstone," he remarked, "and I am afraid I shall have to call upon you for assistance."

"Certainly, my dear fellow; delighted, of course; glad to oblige you in any possible way."

"It is rather an ugly matter."

"You don't say so! Really, now?"

"Yes; but such things will happen once in a while, and I presume the only way is to take them as easily as possible."

"Oh, yes, my dear fellow, there isn't any doubt about that."

"You know James Campbell, of course?"

The moment the question was put, Barry Livingstone felt extremely uncomfortable, for back to his memory came the remembrance of the conversation which he had had with that gentleman in regard to the marquis, wherein Campbell had expressed suspicions which appeared to Livingstone to be without the least foundation.

"Yes, yes, of course," he said, slowly.

"Well, that gentleman and myself have had a little difficulty," the marquis explained.

Immediately to Barry Livingstone's mind came the thought that James Campbell, with that direct frankness so characteristic of the man, had not hesitated to inform the stranger of the suspicions which he entertained.

Of course, the marquis had not the least idea that Campbell had ever had any conversation with Barry Livingstone in regard to the matter, and so he went on, totally unsuspecting that the New Yorker could have any idea of the nature of the trouble.

"Yes, we have had a little difficulty," he repeated.

"And it is of such a nature that in Europe the trouble could only be settled by a hostile meeting upon the field of honor."

"A duel?"

"Exactly; of course, I am aware that in this country the code is not recognized as it should be among gentlemen."

"No, not in the North here, but it is to a great extent down South," the New Yorker observed.

"Down there they fight duels, and although public sentiment is rather more against it than it used to be, yet still the law rarely interferes after the affair is over."

"Why, even in the State of Virginia, and that is only a day's ride from New York City, they have hostile meetings everynow and then."

"And the officers of the law do not interfere?"

"Well, if the authorities get wind of the matter beforehand—which they usually do, for the hostile parties generally have a terrible newspaper row in the beginning—then they try to prevent the meeting, and often succeed, but when an affair of the kind takes place, it is seldom that there is any trouble, to amount to anything, afterward, even if the meeting ends fatally for one of the duelists."

"That is the very place then for our little affair to come off!" the marquis declared.

"But you don't really mean to say that it is as bad as all that?" Barry Livingstone asked, earnestly.

"Indeed it is!" the other replied, in a tone which plainly showed that he meant what he said.

The trouble between us is of such a nature that a resort to the code alone can settle it," the marquis continued.

"I told Mr. Campbell, frankly, that if we were in Europe I should most decidedly challenge him, and he has traveled enough to understand that there, were he to refuse a challenge, he would be posted as a coward, and gentlemen would have nothing more to do with him."

"To my surprise Mr. Campbell said he was perfectly willing to receive a challenge, and would give me all the satisfaction that a gentleman could desire."

"That is Jim Campbell to the life!" the New Yorker exclaimed. "He always was a hot-headed dare-devil!"

"But, I say, marquis, it seems a pity that two such fine fellows as you and Campbell should quarrel. Can't the matter be arranged in some way? Will you allow me to offer my friendly services?"

"That is just what I am about to request, but in regard to the affair being settled in any other way than by a hostile meeting is, I fear, impossible."

"Of course, if Mr. Campbell chooses to tender me a full and ample apology, I should accept it; but I can assure you that, in my opinion, there is not the least chance of his doing anything of the kind."

"No, I should say not, from what I know of Jim," Barry Livingstone remarked, with a shake of the head.

"If he thought he was in the right, the devil himself couldn't make him budge."

The Man of Three.

"Oh, we are in for a hostile meeting—there isn't the least doubt about it!" the marquis declared. "And, my dear fellow, I wanted you to act as my second."

"Now, really, marquis, you place me in a terribly embarrassing position," the New Yorker remarked.

"Of course, dear boy, I should be just charmed to oblige you, but the fact is, Campbell and myself were chums when we were boys, and I couldn't really, under the circumstances, take a position in the least degree hostile to him now."

"But I'll tell you what you can do; take Dick Van Brunt; he'll be delighted to act, and he's been a student in Germany, you know, and understands all about such things much better than I do, for those students are always fighting, you know, and he's deuced well posted."

"But I'll go along as the friend of both parties and see the thing through; you need a surgeon, you know."

"And are you one?"

"Oh, yes, I am a regular full-fledged sawbones, licensed to kill, but I never practiced, you know; it is too great a bore."

"What is the use of a man situated as I am, with plenty of money, troubling his head to cure a lot of people, who, half the time, don't have anything the matter with them?"

"Oh, it's no wonder that you do not practice."

"Here's Dick now!" exclaimed Barry Livingstone, as he caught sight of the young blood entering the room. "I'll call him and explain matters."

"You can trust Dick to keep matters a secret, you know, for he is an awful close-mouthed fellow."

Van Brunt was summoned and an explanation made.

Nothing loth, he agreed to act as the marquis's second, for the young man dearly loved any excitement of this kind, and then, as Barry Livingstone had said, from his experience at the German University, he was well posted on all the points of the "code."

"Campbell is down-stairs now; I saw him in the reading-room just as I came up, with an army friend of his, a lieutenant, John O'Brien, who has just arrived from the Far West, where he has been distinguishing himself as an Indian-fighter."

"I think it is very probable that Mr. Campbell, in expectation of a hostile message from me, has brought this officer with him to act as his second," suggested the marquis.

The others agreed that this was likely.

"As the challenged party, Mr. Campbell has the choice of time, place and weapons," the marquis observed. "But if he desires to know my opinion in regard to those points, I would suggest that we choose some place in the State of Virginia, where we will not be apt to get into any trouble after the affair is over, and the time as soon as convenient; for weapons I would prefer swords."

"Of course these are merely suggestions, for it is his right to decide."

Van Brunt assented, and then departed to deliver the "cartel."

As the marquis supposed, O'Brien was requested by Campbell to act for him.

The arrangements were soon made, and that very night all of the party were on board of a train bound for Virginia's "sacred soil."

When two men really desire to fight, usually there is not much difficulty in their getting at it.

CHAPTER XXXII.

ON THE ROAD.

THE party had taken a train bound for Norfolk, Virginia, on the new and direct road known as the New York & Norfolk, which runs through Philadelphia, branching off at Wilmington directly to the southward, running down the long strip of land—the peninsula—which separates the waters of Chesapeake Bay from the Atlantic Ocean.

Dick Van Brunt was well acquainted with the country, for there is some famous wild fowl shooting all along the Virginia end of the peninsula at certain seasons of the year, and he, in company with other New Yorkers, had been down there on sporting excursions.

So, when the location came to be spoken of, Van Brunt recommended that the affair come off in the neighborhood of Accomack, a small village on the Norfolk Railroad, as he was familiar with the locality and knew that if the affair was managed rightly, there wouldn't be the least danger of any interference on the part of the authorities.

As he explained to Lieutenant O'Brien, who was a genial gentleman, although as wild a fellow as ever wore Uncle Sam's uniform: "Accomack, you see, is a small place; the train arrives there at so early an hour that there is generally only a few people at the station, and they are used to seeing gunning parties from the big Northern cities get off."

"The swords we can wrap up in such a manner that they will look like breech-loading guns taken apart for convenience in traveling, so that our advent will not be likely to create any suspicion."

"A mile or so from the town, there is a secluded glade, a hundred yards or so away from the main road, where the affair can take place without the least danger of any one knowing anything about it, as there isn't a house within sight."

The lieutenant expressed himself as being perfectly satisfied with this, and so the spot was agreed upon.

It was arranged, to avoid suspicion, that the party should not keep together in the cars, but divide, and act as if they were not acquainted with each other.

Campbell and O'Brien were together, Dick Van Brunt kept the marquis company, while Barry Livingstone went off by himself.

Under the circumstances, Livingstone felt extremely awkward.

He was the friend of both men, and did not want to adopt any course which would indicate that he had espoused either man's side in the quarrel.

On the way, Campbell and his second had an earnest conversation.

The lieutenant was in ignorance in regard to the cause of the trouble.

He had happened to meet Campbell at the Fifth Avenue Hotel, and that gentleman, explaining that he expected to receive a challenge to mortal combat, requested him to act as his second.

The young soldier, with that impulsiveness peculiar to his calling, replied that he would be delighted, but now that all the particulars were arranged, and they were on the way to the dueling ground, his curiosity became excited in regard to the cause of the quarrel, for he guessed from the determined attitude of both the principals, that it was no trivial matter which had led to the hostile meeting.

So, prefacing his query with the remark that he knew it wasn't any of his business, he inquired as to how Campbell had managed to insult the marquis in so gross a manner that blood alone could wash out the stain.

Campbell did not hesitate to explain.

"I think the fellow is a fraud; I don't believe he is any more a marquis than I am, and, though I never said anything to lead him to think I suspected him, yet in some way, instinctively, I suppose, he understood that I doubted him, and so seized upon an opportunity to pick a quarrel with me."

I met him more than half-way, and as plumply and promptly told him what I thought of him, and then when he suggested fighting he found me agreeable."

The face of the young soldier grew serious, and he shook his head.

"My dear fellow, a gentleman is not obliged to go out with a rascal, you know, and in such a case as this, if a man of this kind threatens to annoy you, the way to settle the matter is to take a good ratan cane and thrash the scoundrel within an inch of his life."

"Yes, I understand that, but there are cases where a gentleman can afford to waive his rights and go out with a rascal."

"There was an instinctive dislike sprung up between this man and myself the very first time we encountered each other, and I felt in regard to him much the same as I would to a snake crawling across my path; I have a morbid desire to put my foot on the head of the reptile and crush it."

"Yes, yes, I can understand that; but you are really giving the rascal too much of a chance—meeting him upon equal terms and, practically, giving him his choice of weapons, for he preferred swords to pistols."

"Well, I was willing to agree to fight with swords, because I may say, without boasting, that I am a master of the weapon."

"In China, sword-exercise was our principal amusement. In our force we had men of all nations, adventurers seeking their fortune, and many of them were fellows who had left their country for their country's good,' as the saying is; and so I had a chance to encounter swordsmen of all nations, from the scientific Frenchman, fighting strictly according to book rules, to the wily Italian, who trusted to fly 'ricks to give him the victory, and the dashing Spaniard and ruthless Russian, both of whom depended upon the fury of their attacks to disconcert their antagonist."

"And so, having studied in so many different schools of fencing, it will be a wonder if I am not able to manage this fellow, who will be more than ordinarily skillful if he is an expert in one particular school."

"Well, what is the programme?" asked the lieutenant, reassured by Campbell's statement.

"Do you intend to wing the fellow so as to teach him a lesson, or to do for him outright?"

"Oh, no, not that!" Campbell exclaimed, earnestly.

"Although in the heat of battle I have taken life and held it no sin, yet, in an encounter of this kind, unless it was to keep my adversary from killing me, I would shrink from taking his life."

"My idea is to wound the fellow so that it will be a lesson to him not to try the same game again."

"Well, that agrees with my ideas."

"And now, my dear fellow, I want to caution you in regard to a certain point," Campbell observed.

"As I told you, in China we had a number of adventurers in our ranks, and some of them were men, who, in my opinion, richly deserved the gallows."

"One fellow in particular, I remember, a Frenchman, a quarrelsome blade—a regular fire-eater, who was never so happy as when engaged in an 'affair of honor,' as he termed it, and he was one who always arranged so that he could be the challenged party, which gave him a choice of weapons; he invariably chose swords, and always came out the victor."

"Suspicion was excited, and on one occasion an investigation of his person was demanded: he refused indignantly to submit to anything of the kind."

"His adversary, who was one of the best swordsmen in the service, suspected something wrong, and so, instead of striving to wound his man in the breast made play for his throat."

"The moment the Frenchman discovered this he became nervous, lost his head, as the saying is, and his antagonist, pressing him hard, with a single straight thrust through the throat stretched him dead upon the earth, and then insisted that the body should be examined."

"It was done, and the breast of the dead bully was found to be protected by a coat of mail, so finely made that it adjusted itself easily to the movements of the body and yet was proof against a sword-thrust."

"The infernal scoundrel!" was the lieutenant's comment.

"Now, in this case, I fancy that this fellow is one of the same breed, and I want you to be sure that he doesn't play any shirt-of-mail business on me."

"Oho! now that I am warned, you can depend upon my looking out for the trick!" O'Brien cried.

"Although I will confess that if you hadn't spoken of the matter I should never have thought of the thing, for I never heard of anything like it before."

"These European scoundrels possess a peculiar expertise in that direction," Campbell replied.

Thus warned, O'Brien during the passage took occasion to seek Van Brunt and suggest that, as a matter of fairness—so that after the matter was over no one would be able to say there had been anything wrong about it—the seconds should have the privilege of examining the person of the opposing principal, in order to bear witness that no unfair means had been used to bar the entrance of the sword-blade.

Van Brunt was at first disposed to object, as in his judgment such a movement was uncalled for, and the marquis, being a stranger, might think it an aspersion upon his honor.

The lieutenant was firm, though.

"If your principal doesn't desire to take advantage of some trick he ought not to object," O'Brien exclaimed, decidedly.

"It is as fair for one as it is for the other."

Van Brunt could not gainsay this reasoning, and so he consented.

When he informed his principal, though, the marquis was extremely angry.

"You should not have yielded the point!" he cried.

The marquis had taken a berth in the forward part of the "sleeper," while the others were in the rear end of it.

"It is an insult, and I will not submit to it."

"You will have to, marquis, or else they will swear you mean to play foully."

The marquis grumbled, but there was no help for it, and the only consolation he had was to mutter to himself:

"I will kill him though, nevertheless!"

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE DUEL.

In the cold gray light of the early dawn the dueling party left the train at the little Virginia station.

As had been anticipated, the only people at the station were the men whose duties called them there.

A couple of passengers only disembarked beside the New York party.

Acting under Dick Van Brunt's instructions, all of them got off the cars on the opposite side to where the station was, so that the cars hid them from the sight of the group on the platform.

Van Brunt and the marquis went on ahead, then O'Brien and Campbell followed, some distance behind, and Barry Livingstone brought up the rear.

The idea of this movement was to disarm suspicion, for if any curious "native" noticed the strangers straggling along in this way he would not be apt to think they came in company.

Soon the neighborhood of the iron way was left behind, and the solitude of the interior reached.

A half-an-hour's walk brought the party to the spot which Dick Van Brunt had selected.

It was some little distance from the road, and

so many clumps of scraggy pines intervened, that the duelists were completely hidden from the view of any chance passer-by upon the highway.

"O'Brien surveyed "the vantage of the ground," and then gave a nod of satisfaction.

"'Tis a pretty place as my eyes have ever looked upon for two gentlemen to settle a little misunderstanding," he observed.

The swords were unwrapped—there were two pair—one furnished by each party, but there was no particular difference between them, and both seconds expressed themselves satisfied with either pair.

The swords were the usual French dueling weapons, and were indeed fine bits of steel.

Barry Livingstone had his box of surgical instruments, so that everything was in order.

"How about the conditions of the fight?" O'Brien asked.

"Is it to cease at the first blood?"

Van Brunt looked inquiringly at his principal.

"No, sir, the insult which has been put upon me cannot be atoned for by a little simple blood-letting!" the marquis exclaimed, sternly.

"We must keep the field until one or the other of us is unable to do so."

O'Brien consulted Campbell with a look.

"That is perfectly satisfactory to me," he remarked.

Then the contestants commenced to disrobe.

Barry Livingstone thought that, as the friend of both men, he would make one last effort to arrange matters, but both were eager for the fray, the marquis in particular, and so the effort was fruitless.

The two stripped off their coats and vests, first removing their hats, and then they fastened their handkerchiefs firmly around their waists to serve as belts.

"We are ready for the examination," O'Brien said, after the principals were stripped for the combat.

The marquis darted a venomous look at the lieutenant as he approached.

"This is really something entirely out of the common!" he exclaimed.

"Never in all my experience did I hear of such a thing. You Americans must have a strange kind of gentlemen among you when such a precaution is considered necessary."

"Yes, we do sometimes; generally adventurers from other lands, who are up to all sorts of dishonorable tricks," the young soldier replied, with perfect coolness.

The marquis was enraged at the speech, but realizing that there wasn't anything to be gained by bandying words, held his peace.

As, after the usual custom, the marquis wore a shirt fastened at the back, it was not possible for him to expose his bare chest for inspection, but O'Brien, by carefully feeling, soon decided that he wore no armor of any kind, although he seemed to have on an uncommonly heavy undershirt.

Still, no fault could be found with that, but the lieutenant was careful to report the fact to his principal when he returned to him.

Campbell, of course, had successfully passed through the inspection.

"The fellow doesn't wear any armor," O'Brien remarked; "but he has on a very stiff and heavy undershirt; a man can't very well object to that, you know."

"Of course not," Campbell replied. "I think I see the fellow's game, though. He is probably wearing a couple of undershirts made out of chamois skin, trusting that, like an ancient breastplate, they will, in a measure, dull the point of a sword."

"By rights the fellow ought to be made to take them off," the lieutenant declared.

"Great heavens! do you want the man to catch his death of cold?" Campbell demanded, with a sarcastic smile.

"We are ready, gentlemen," observed Van Brunt at this point.

The two advanced and faced each other.

Between them there was a decided contrast.

Both had the shirt-sleeve of the right arm rolled well up above the elbow, so that the forearm was exposed.

Campbell had the limb of a gladiator, while the marquis's was but poorly developed.

The American was a third larger than the foreigner in every way, and yet far more perfect in his proportions, and then he was in such a splendid physical condition that there did not seem to be an ounce of superfluous flesh upon him.

As they say of the pugilistic hero when he steps into the prize-ring in perfect condition:

"He was fit to fight for a man's life."

The marquis was annoyed by the looks of the other when he faced him, and a serious expression appeared upon his face, just as if, for the first time, he realized how difficult was the task he had undertaken.

If Campbell's wrist was as strong as the size and structure of his arm would seem to promise; if he was at all expert with the sword, certainly then it would take a good man to beat him, for despite his size he seemed as light on his feet as a dancing-master.

The marquis was a good swordsman; if he had

not been, he never would have risked this encounter; still, he was somewhat out of practice, for it had been two or three years since he had had a sword in his hand; but when he determined to force Campbell to a duel he had relied upon the fact that, as a rule, Americans are not much skilled in the use of the sword; for it is not the custom in this country to teach gentlemen's sons to fence; while abroad, particularly in France and Germany, it is considered an indispensable part of a young man's education, if he comes of a good family, and, naturally, all young men, even of the lower classes, who aspire to rise, consider it necessary to learn the use of the sword.

The marquis knew that Campbell had served in China, but had an idea that it was in the naval branch of the service, and, as a rule, sailors are not good swordsmen.

But, in reality, it was in the army that Campbell held a position, and, as we have seen from his conversation with O'Brien, had unusual opportunities for becoming an expert swordsman.

A few moments after the two crossed blades the American was able to take the measure of his opponent.

From the peculiar flourishes indulged in by the other, who made the attack, Campbell contenting himself with standing on the defensive, the American came to the conclusion that his antagonist, at some time, had been a teacher of fencing, and that about all his practice had been in the fencing school with the foils rather than on the actual dueling field.

All the old tricks of the sword academy the marquis tried upon his opponent, but Campbell, with his wrist of steel, easily parried the attacks.

The marquis, true to the school in which he had learned his art, was careful not to attack so fiercely as to expose himself, and so, for five minutes there was as pretty a display of the swordsman's skill as any one could have wished to see.

But at the end of that time the marquis began to tire.

He could do nothing with this devil of an American, who seemed able to stand the shock of an attack like a stone wall, and yet had a wrist as limber as a willow twig.

In a moment of vexation the marquis forgot his caution, lunged too far to be able to quickly recover himself, and then, taking advantage of the "opening," Campbell's arm shot out with the precision of a machine, and the blade of his weapon passed entirely through the sword-arm of the other.

With a cry of rage, Morel dropped his steel. The duel was ended.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

PHENIX ON THE SCENT.

BARRY LIVINGSTONE and Van Brunt hurried to the assistance of the marquis, while Campbell rested the point of his blade on the ground and waited.

"You are wounded!" Livingstone cried.

"Yes," replied the marquis, wincing with pain, and clasping his wounded arm with his left hand.

"Not seriously, I hope!" Van Brunt exclaimed.

"No, 'tis not mortal," observed the other, endeavoring to force a smile, "but 'tis enough to keep me from fighting for some time. The sword-blade has passed through my arm. It is very—very painful."

Barry Livingstone hastened to get out his bandages, he having had the forethought to provide for such an "accident" as this.

"Are you satisfied?" O'Brien asked of the other second, after the fashion customary in such matters.

"You are disabled?" Van Brunt inquired of his principal.

"Completely so, and it will be two or three months before I will be able to hold a sword in my hand. Say to the gentleman, though, that I hope he will be willing to give me my revenge at some future day."

This message being conveyed to O'Brien, he replied, politely, that his principal would be only too happy to oblige.

Then the duelists parted, and proceeded to dress.

Barry Livingstone, who for once in his life had contrived to do something, had brought a flask of brandy with him, and but for the stimulant the marquis would have fainted from the pain while his arm was being dressed.

As it was, the brandy enabled him to keep up, although Van Brunt and Barry Livingstone had to assist him all the way to the station.

While O'Brien was helping Campbell to dress there was a brief conversation between the two.

"What do you think of our friend wanting his revenge at some future time?" the lieutenant asked.

"Oh, that is only talk," Campbell replied, contemptuously.

"He don't want any more; he is satisfied; the man, though a thorough piece of scab, is no

fool. He knows that I am his master, and you will find that he never will be idiot enough to stand before me, sword in hand, again."

"I presume that if you had wanted to, you could have put the blade through his body just as easily as through his arm?"

"Yes, the arm-thrust was the most difficult of the two, and when I saw that his blade was out of distance, and that there was a chance for me to get home, for a second I hesitated, and, I admit, the temptation was strong for me to run the rascal through the body. If I had made the lunge in that direction, the marquis would have journeyed to New York in a baggage-car, safely packed up in a pine box."

"Well, I think you acted more wisely in not killing him, although I don't believe there is a doubt that the man would have killed you without the least compunction if he had been able to do the job."

"Yes, I think so myself, for there was a demoniac glare in his eyes when he made the attack. It was his intention, I think, to either kill or wound me so seriously that I would be disabled."

"He has an idea that I am in his way—I do not take any stock in his pretensions, and so is afraid that, sooner or later, I will be able to expose him, and that is the reason he forced this quarrel upon me."

"He calculated that I—like the most of Americans—would not be an expert in the use of the sword, and so he could get me out of the way without much trouble and with no particular risk to himself."

"But I say, old fellow, if this man is an impostor, as you suspect, and as I think myself from what I have seen of him, you ought to expose the scoundrel, particularly after this attempt upon your life, for to my thinking it is nothing but murder outright when a man who is an expert with a weapon badgers another, who he feels sure is no match for him, into a contest."

"Oh, yes, there isn't the least doubt about that; but I can assure you I do not mean to allow this affair to rest here; in the future I shall make it my business to see if I can't secure proof enough to convince everybody that the man is an imposter."

O'Brien warmly approved of the resolution.

By this time the other had finished dressing; the swords were carefully wrapped up and they started for the station.

In due time the marquis, supported by Dick Van Brunt and Barry Livingstone, made his appearance. A sling had been arranged for his wounded arm, and everything possible had been done to make him comfortable.

The up-train for New York soon came along; the party got on board and in due time arrived at New York.

A carriage was procured and the marquis conveyed to his home.

During the last part of the journey the injured man had spells of faintness, despite the brandy that was freely administered, and when he felt that he was likely to become insensible he told Barry Livingstone:

"In case I have a fainting-fit, don't undo my clothes, as it always acts badly with me."

The party had secured a section in a drawing-room car, so as to be alone and safe from observation.

Thanks to the brandy, though, the marquis did not become wholly insensible—that is, did not go into a dead faint, although he came very near it.

When they arrived in New York Campbell and O'Brien, who had journeyed to the city in another car, encountered the party just as the marquis had been put into the coach.

Livingstone exchanged a few words with Campbell, explaining how his antagonist had suffered during the journey, and happened, accidentally, to mention the request which the marquis had made in respect to his clothes.

After the conversation ended and the coach departed, Campbell and O'Brien exchanged glances.

"Did you notice what he said in regard to the marquis not wishing any one to touch his clothes?" O'Brien asked.

"Oh, yes; it did not escape my observation."

"What does that mean?"

"That the man has a good and sufficient reason for not wishing his person to be exposed."

"Of course; I jumped to that conclusion, but what is the reason?"

"In France it is the custom to brand criminals with a hot iron, as in this country we brand stock."

"And do you think this man—"

"Bears the marks of the galleys? I do. I think he is what in France they call a *forçat*—a branded galley slave!"

This suspicion gave the young men much food for thought.

The marquis was conveyed to his house in a private car.

Barry Livingstone and Van Brunt had reported to the wounded man that he had better go to a hotel and call in the first-class physi-

cian," or even to a hospital, where his wound could have proper treatment.

But he would not consent.

"It is a scratch, nothing more," he declared. "My valet is one of the handiest fellows in the world, and I would far rather trust to his care than to a stranger's."

So home the marquis went.

The valet was a short, thick-set fellow, with jet-black hair, which curled in little ringlets all over his head, and a swarthy face. A Frenchman from the southern provinces of France, or an Italian, evidently.

The marquis was assisted into the house, and then the young men took their departure.

"Things have gone wrong, then?" said the valet.

"Yes, the infernal scoundrel turned out to be a wonderfully good swordsman, and he did not have the least difficulty in driving his blade through my arm—my sword-arm, too, so I was not able to continue the contest, although I had no stomach for more, being satisfied the man was playing with me, as a cat plays with a mouse, and if he had chosen he could have run me through the body—and so have settled my account with this world—as easily as through the arm."

"I was afraid of the affair," the valet remarked, with a shake of the head.

"Although your skill with the sword is so great that I did not think there was any danger you would meet your match, still, some way, I had a feeling that the duel was a mistake."

"But this man is in my way—he threatens me!" the marquis declared, angrily.

"Ah, well, there's an old proverb which says there are more ways than one to kill a cat," the other observed, meaningly.

Leaving the master and man to their discussion, the result of which the reader will see anon, we will turn our attention to other matters.

Now that the duel was over and no serious result had ensued, it was an utter impossibility for Barry Livingstone and Dick Van Brunt to keep their knowledge of the matter to themselves.

They had to whisper an account of the affair to some of their intimate friends, and so the news generally spread, until even the journals which prided themselves on giving "spicy" accounts of "doings in high life," got hold of the matter, and served up an elaborate description of the affray.

Of course, no names were mentioned, but the parties engaged in the "picnic," as the newspaper men termed it, were so hinted at, that it was possible for all acquainted with those concerned to recognize them from the description.

And so the matter came to Joe Phenix's notice.

"Oho," he muttered, after he had finished the newspaper account, "I think this will require a little looking into on my part."

"I must see the victor before I sleep!"

And Campbell was astonished by a visit from the German, Carl, that evening.

CHAPTER XXXV.

MISS BIRDSEYE'S MYSTERY.

Of course the young man did not have the least suspicion that the stolid-looking German was a detective in disguise.

He thought he knew who he was, of course, but had never paid any particular attention to him, except to notice how extremely stupid he appeared, and to wonder to himself how the judge managed to get along with so apparently dull a fellow.

He had even mentioned to the judge that his valet would never be hung for his intelligence, and the old lawyer replied that Carl was like a singed cat, much better than he looked.

And now, when the German made his appearance in his room, he supposed he had come on some message from Judge Colamore.

"Well, what is it, Carl?" the young man asked.

"I would like to ask you a few questions, please," was the reply that came to his amazement.

"A few questions, eh, Carl?"

"Yes, sir, if you will have the goodness to answer them."

"Oh, yes, if I can, I will," Campbell replied, disposed to humor the man in his rather eccentric manner.

"It is about this duel, an account of which is given in one of the evening journals."

The young man looked at the speaker in amazement, for this was entirely unexpected.

"Eh, what is that you say?" he asked, as soon as he could sufficiently recover from his astonishment to be able to speak.

He thought that he must have misunderstood the man, and that there was some mistake about the matter.

Campbell had not seen any of the evening newspapers, and so was not aware that with the so-called journalistic enterprise, one of them had seen fit to busy itself with his private affairs.

"It is in regard to the duel in which you lately took part that I wish to speak," the other

"In the *Evening Telltale* a full account is given, and although no names are mentioned, yet it is plainly evident to all who are acquainted with the parties, who they are.

"You were one principal and the Marquis of Morel the other. You fought in Virginia, with swords, and you succeeded in disabling the marquis by wounding him in the sword-arm."

Campbell was both astonished and annoyed.

"Oh, this is in the evening newspaper, is it?"

"It is, sir."

"It would give me a deal of satisfaction to cane the puppy who wrote the article," Campbell cried in wrath.

"Oh, I don't see, sir, why you should wish to do that, since the account makes you out to be quite a hero."

"Ah! it does?"

"Yes, sir."

"The scoundrel!"

"And, as I was interested, I thought I would come and see you about it," the disguised detective remarked, keeping up his assumed character to the life.

Again was Campbell surprised.

"Well, I don't see what possible interest you can take in the affair."

"Oh, I do, sir, I assure you; I take a great deal of interest in anything that concerns this gentleman who is known as the Marquis of Morel."

"The deuce you do?"

"Yes, sir."

"But I don't understand why you should."

"Only because I happen to be a detective officer, and I fancy that one of these days I shall have the opportunity of snapping a pair of bracelets, more useful than ornamental, upon the wrists of this so-called Marquis of Morel," Joe Phenix replied, with an entire change of manner.

Campbell was taken completely by astonishment.

"Upon my word, you astound me!" he exclaimed. "Does Judge Colamore have any suspicion that you are here in disguise?"

"Oh, yes; the judge knows it, and it was by his order I commenced to investigate the matter."

"Is it possible, then, that he has a suspicion in regard to the marquis?"

"Ah, no, not the slightest, and he would probably be amazed if he knew what I suspect."

Then Joe Phenix, at Campbell's request, took a chair and proceeded to explain how it was that he came to be in Pine Tree Hall in disguise.

And the detective not only told the story of the suspicious death of Campbell Auchinclose and the disappearance of his will, but also revealed to Campbell the ideas which he had formed in regard to the plot to entrap the young heiress.

Joe Phenix was a shrewd judge of mankind and felt sure that not only was it safe to trust James Campbell, but in that gentleman he would find a valuable ally.

The young man was amazed at the disclosure, but, after reflecting over the matter for a few moments, he told the detective that in his opinion he had made a shrewd guess at the truth.

And then he related how he had happened to make the marquis's acquaintance, and how his suspicions became excited by the wonderful luck which had attended the other at cards.

"The fellow was shrewd enough to see that you suspected him, and then, too, as long as you were an inmate of this mansion, you were decidedly in his way," Joe Phenix observed.

"Confident in his skill as a swordsman, he challenged you, thinking that this would be the easiest way to remove an obstacle from his path."

"My thought, exactly!"

"The circle which I am drawing around him is gradually narrowing, and the first thing my gentleman knows I will have him dead to rights," the man-hunter remarked, grimly.

Then, first warning Campbell to keep his knowledge to himself and to be on the lookout, Joe Phenix took his departure.

And while this interview was taking place between the two men, Miss Birdseye made an astonishing disclosure to Virginia.

When the judge came from town that afternoon he had brought a letter for Miss Birdseye, but had forgotten to give it to her until after dinner was over and the two girls had retired to their apartment.

Without the least suspicion of what the letter contained, Pauline opened and read it in presence of her companion, and then, despite the wonderful control which she had over herself for one so young, could not restrain her tears.

Virginia at once flew to her side, and winding her arms around the weeping girl besought her to explain what was the matter.

For a while Pauline resisted the entreaties of her friend, and then, breaking down all of a sudden, made a full and frank confession.

"I have deceived you and everybody else," she exclaimed between her sobs, "but as long as I didn't do anything to anybody I didn't think it mattered, but now the truth must come

out, and I suppose you will send me away and will not love me any more."

Virginia rose nobly to the situation, though, and protested that she knew her friend had not, and would not, ever do anything to destroy the love which existed between them.

Thus encouraged, Pauline told her story, which was both strange and sad.

She was the daughter of an actress—a girl who had been trained to a stage life from an early age, but who had been wooed and won by the son of a wealthy man, fascinated by her charms.

She married the young fellow, thinking she had made a great catch, and left the mimic life to play the great lady, but her husband was promptly disowned by his family for leaving thus disgraced himself, and, being a man without either energy or ambition, was not able to support his wife, so she was obliged to go back to the stage in order to get a living for both of them.

The wife struggled along manfully, hoping that in time her husband's family would look with favor upon her, but, as years passed on, their hatred grew more and more bitter, and the life of the unfortunate wife was saddened by the knowledge that her husband would desert her in a moment and go back to his own folks if they would only consent to receive him, but as he had gone rapidly to the bad after his marriage, having taken to drink, gambling, and all sorts of bad practices, his relations would not have anything to do with him, but they blamed the unfortunate wife for his ruin, while, really, he was secretly on the downward track before he met the young actress.

A child was born, and while the mother was unable to attend to her professional duties she had a hard time, and if, with that large and open-hearted charity so common in the theatrical profession, her associates had not aided her from their own scanty purses, and, in addition, gotten up a benefit for her which netted a couple of hundred dollars, she would have surely died.

But as soon as she was able to work again, two shocks came rapidly upon her.

In a drunken spree her husband was accidentally killed, and a few days afterward her father-in-law died, and then an investigation revealed that for years he had been using other people's money, and died worse than a beggar.

Good-by now to the actress's hope of ever getting anything from her husband's family for either herself or her child.

And from that time forth the mother seemed to take a dislike to the innocent little one.

When she was old enough she was put on the stage, a life the girl hated from the beginning.

Then the mother made the discovery that she possessed clairvoyant powers and abandoned the stage and went into that business.

By this time Pauline was a girl of sixteen, and as she begged to be allowed to leave the stage, by a skillfully concocted story, admission was secured for her in the fashionable boarding-school, with the idea that she might make valuable acquaintances there and so be enabled to secure a rich husband.

The mother was continually writing in regard to this, and Pauline was obliged to reply to her as yet there was not the slightest prospect of such a thing.

And now there came a letter announcing that the mother had married a gentleman from Australia—she had been in California for years—to sail to her new home on the following day, and that henceforth Pauline must look after herself as the mother would not be able to do anything more for her.

Virginia joined her tears to her friend's, for the story touched her to the heart.

"Your mother is a cruel thing, and it is plain that she doesn't deserve to have so good a girl as you are; but you must not worry. She has not acted like a mother and is not worthy a single tear!"

"Forget this wretched life, just as if you never knew it. From this moment you are really and truly my sister, and while I have a dollar you shall share it!"

A true lady in every respect was Virginia Auchinclose.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

A STUPENDOUS AFFAIR.

And now a month glides by without any incident, worthy of being chronicled, occurring to any of the characters in our story.

The wound of the marquis had turned out to be far less serious than was at first expected, and by the end of the month he had the use of the limb again, although he had to be careful how he used it.

Judge Colamore had heard of the duel, and took Campbell to task in regard to it, although he was really rather inclined to be proud of the fact that an American should be able to meet a foreign nobleman at his own game and get the best of him.

Campbell said quietly that the marquis had taken a dislike to him, and that the meeting could not be avoided.

"And the grounds of the quarrel?" the old

lawyer asked, with a curious expression upon his face.

"Really none at all, excepting that the gentleman did not like me, and I didn't like him, and, when you come right down to it, neither one of us had the slightest reason for the dislike."

"Then you didn't quarrel in regard to Miss Virginia?"

"Oh, no; what put that idea into your head?"

"Well, no particular reason except that both of you seem to be paying her attention, and it is the most natural thing in the world, you know, for two men to quarrel over a woman."

"Yes, that is true enough, but, in this case, Miss Auchinclose's name was not brought into the discussion at all, and, as far as any rivalry goes between us in regard to the lady, no feeling exists on my part; of course I cannot answer for him, but as far as I am concerned, if Virginia prefers this foreigner to myself I shall bow in the most graceful manner possible to the decision."

"I am not one of the kind of men to successfully play the disappointed lover, or to want to kill my rival because the lady chooses to prefer his suit to mine."

"You are a sensible fellow!" the judge exclaimed.

"Well, for a man of my years I have seen a good deal of life, and I think it has made me something of a philosopher."

"Like the Moslem, I accept my fate—it is my kismet, and I bow to it."

"Now, in regard to this quarrel: the gentleman and myself had a brief, though somewhat animated discussion."

"He suggested that he thought I was a puppy, and I told him plainly that I considered him an impostor."

"An impostor!" exclaimed the judge, in amazement. "Why, what the deuce do you mean by that?"

"Simply that I think he is masquerading under false colors, and I don't believe he is any more a marquis than I am."

"Oh, I think you are wrong, and there is no doubt that he is a man of large property."

"Are you sure of that?"

"Yes, yes, I have arranged investments for him that will require him to put up some fifty thousand dollars, and, whether he is a marquis or not, he must have some money, or he couldn't go in at that rate."

"When he produces fifty thousand dollars, I shall believe he can raise that amount, but not before," Campbell replied, decidedly incredulous.

The conversation ended at that point, for Judge Colamore felt so sure the marquis was a man of wealth that he did not care to debate the question, particularly as he saw Campbell was so firm in his belief that words, without proofs, would have no effect upon him.

"Within a month, though, the marquis will pay over the money, and then Jim will have to admit that whether he has a right to his title of nobility or not, he certainly has the money to sustain it," the old lawyer remarked to himself.

Ever since the time of the duel Campbell had taken particular care how he exposed himself to a secret attack, particularly after nightfall, for on the day that followed Phenix's interview with him, the detective had taken pains to warn him to be on his guard.

"If the fellow is in league with a gang of desperate men, as I think, then he may try by means of the knife or bullet of the assassin to accomplish that which he failed to do by a duel," the bloodhound warned.

And Campbell had seen too much of life not to pay strict heed to the caution, so that if any evil-disposed persons were lying in wait to attack him, they were afforded no opportunity.

The attentions of the two gentlemen to the young heiress of course excited Pauline's curiosity as to which she really preferred, but when she took advantage of the intimacy which existed between her and the mistress of Pine Tree Hall to ask her which of the two gentlemen she really favored, Virginia answered, innocently, that she did not know.

"You see, there is such a difference between the two," the girl explained.

"The marquis is all politeness—he really seems to try and anticipate my every wish, and if I feel inclined, woman-like, to play the capricious tyrant once in a while, he doesn't seem to mind it in the least, but bows in the most submissive manner, while the other one is inclined to be independent and not to submit to my whims."

"In short, he gives me to understand that if I marry him he expects to play the master, while the other seems to promise that he will yield implicit obedience to my commands."

"Yes, but is it safe to trust him?" Pauline asked, with a wise shake of her head.

"The lover sometimes changes greatly when he becomes the husband," she added, shrewdly.

"Yes, I don't doubt that that is very true; but now, don't tease me about them, please. I don't really know my own mind—I don't know which one of the two I like best; and, any-

way, I'm not going to marry either one of them in a hurry."

And now we must direct the reader's attention to a character whose acquaintance was made in the early part of our tale, but whom we have sadly neglected.

This was the "brother" of the Jew broker, who called himself Abraham Loenthal.

Thanks to his push and dash the firm of Loenthal Brothers branched out widely.

New and commodious offices were taken, and the partners went into an extensive "bucket-shop" business, as it is termed.

The bucket-shop is a base imitation of the Stock Exchange on a small scale, and men who possess only a dollar or two are enabled to bet on the rise and fall of stocks.

Of course, there is never much capital in any of these petty affairs, and when a flurry takes place in the market, so stocks either rise or fall, vibrating ten or twenty points, the bucket-shop usually closes its doors, leaving its customers to whistle for their money.

But the Loenthal Brothers seemed to stand the "press" better than the majority of such houses, and the report went around that they were making a great deal of money, and even some of the conservative brokers did not disdain to trade with the new firm.

And then there came a stroke of ill-luck to the pushing firm which was hard to bear.

Their office was next door to one of the largest banks in New York, and one night burglars made a raid on this bank, gaining access to it through the Loenthal establishment.

Both the broker's office and the bank were "cracked" in the most scientific manner.

The Loenths estimated their loss would reach about ten thousand dollars, but the bank was robbed of over eighty thousand dollars in gold, bills and Government bonds, the robbers disdaining to touch a half-million in securities which could not be readily disposed of without detection.

New York was astounded, for it was one of the biggest robberies which had ever occurred, and there did not seem to be the slightest clew to the thieves.

The detectives were all at fault, and Joe Phenix was sent for in hot haste.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

GATHERING UP THE THREADS.

WHEN Phenix arrived at the office of the Superintendent of Police all the details of the affair were placed before him.

The detective pondered over the matter for a few minutes and then asked:

"What sort of reputation do these Loenths bear?"

One of the Wall street men was present, and the chief turned to him for a report.

There is a regular detective force assigned to Wall street to protect the vast interests which center there, and the detectives who compose it are known as the "Wall street men."

Naturally, under the circumstances, these officers are well acquainted with all the Wall street firms, either through personal acquaintance, or by reputation.

"It is an old firm—been on the street dealing in a small way for some time," the detective replied. "But when I say the firm, I mean the elder brother, Moses Loenthal. He used to be a sort of a curbstone broker, as they call them—carried his office in his hat, but since his brother, Abraham, joined him they have gone into the bucket shop business, and have been credited with making a good deal of money."

"It is understood on the street that the younger brother furnished the capital, and, according to all accounts, he is the man of the firm, a pushing, energetic fellow, although he keeps in the background and allows the other to do the talking."

"Has there ever been any suspicions of crooked business on the part of either of these Loenths?" Joe Phenix asked.

"Well, no, I don't think there has," replied the detective slowly, racking his brains to remember.

"Come to think of it though, I believe the elder brother, when he was doing business by himself some years ago, did get into some scrapes," the officer continued, after a pause.

"Do you remember the nature of the trouble?" Joe Phenix asked, carefully noting every word.

"Well, I was just trying to think. As near as I can remember he disposed of some securities which turned out to have been stolen."

"Alas!" exclaimed Phenix.

"But he managed to come out of the scrape with flying colors," the Wall street man hastened to assert.

"He proved that he had bought them over his counter and paid honest money for them, giving just about what the bonds were worth too, only standing a show to make a fair commission on them, and that seemed to prove that he hadn't any suspicion there was anything wrong with the securities, for if he had thought they were crooked, and was willing to risk buying them, knowing there was a chance of his

being detected when he attempted to dispose of them, he certainly would not have given anything like their real value."

"That is good, sound reasoning," observed the Superintendent of Police with an approving nod.

"The 'fence' who receives stolen goods, knowing them to be stolen, is never willing to give but a trifle of their real worth."

"He demands an enormous profit in order to pay him for the risks he runs."

"Then in your judgment neither one of these Loenthals is a crook?" Joe Phenix asked.

"No, I don't think so, and I feel perfectly satisfied that they didn't have anything to do with this robbery, for the crib was cracked in a first-class manner, and no one but professionals, who are away at the top of the heap, would be able to do the trick."

"That is true," added the chief. "According to all accounts the job was performed in the most workmanlike manner. The vaults and safes were first-class articles, and, until this robbery, every one believed them to be burglar-proof, but the fellows who did the trick were not only extra good workmen, but must also have been provided with splendid tools."

And as the Superintendent of Police spoke, back to the mind of Joe Phenix came the remembrance of the kit of tools which he had discovered in the secret pockets of the fisherman up by Throg's Neck, whom he had choked in such a scientific manner. The detective had difficulty in repressing a grim smile as the thought came to him that, in all probability, he had a clew to the men who had "got away" with this astonishing amount of plunder, even before he had thoroughly examined into the matter.

There is an old proverb, "All roads lead to Rome!" and since Phenix had been employed to unravel the mystery attending the death of Campbell Auchinclose it seemed to him that at every turn he encountered traces of a mysterious band of scoundrels, who seemed to be capable of committing any crime, and yet, so skillful were the marauders that, although he was sure of the existence of the band, he was not able to trace any crime home to them.

But at last he thought he had a clew in this colossal bank-robbery which would amount to something.

Plunder had been secured which it would be possible to trace.

The detective made a bold guess at the truth.

The Marquis of Morel was at the bottom of all the mischief.

Not only was he an impostor—no nobleman at all—but the leader of a desperate and determined band of outlaws, who had planned a most gigantic scheme which, commencing with the murder of Campbell Auchinclose, was designed to entrap the young heiress of the old man, and so secure the greater part of the wealth which had descended to her.

Thanks to this bank-robbery, Phenix now believed he could get in a stroke at the villains which would destroy them root and branch.

Not a word though did he say in regard to his suspicions to the superintendent or the other officers.

Alone and unaided, excepting by his faithful spy, Kate Scott, he had discovered the track of the outlaws, and now that he had his game fairly in sight he was not going to allow others to come in and enjoy any of the triumph.

That there was something "crooked" about the firm of Loenthal Brothers he had not the least doubt, although the younger brother was a stranger and the other had borne a fair reputation in the "street" for years.

He felt certain that the elder Loenthal was a Wall street "fence," and that his broker's office was but a cover to his real business, which was disposing of stolen securities.

And that he had only had trouble once was due to the fact that he managed his business so carefully that he had not been detected in his tricks.

As to the younger brother, who had lately made his appearance and who had furnished the capital which had enabled the firm to go to work on a large scale, he was undoubtedly one of the members of the gang of imported rascals, who had crossed the water in order to show the Americans a trick or two worth knowing.

"I would like to make an examination of the premises, and also have a chance to hear the broker's account of what they know about the matter, without their suspecting that I am a detective," Phenix observed.

His idea was that the robbery had been planned right in the broker's office, and the proximity of the bank gave the gang a chance "to get in their fine work" without any one being able to suspect what they were up to until the job was done.

"Of course, come along with me," the superintendent said. "I am going to make a personal inspection of the premises. Get yourself up as a country sheriff who has come to New York to see the sights, and no one will be apt to suspect that you are anything but what you appear to be."

It did not take Joe Phenix long to disguise himself, so altering his personal appearance that

his nearest friend would never have recognized him.

He now looked like a middle-aged, well-to-do farmer, the back-country sheriff to the life.

In company with the superintendent and the Wall street detective a visit was made to the scene of the robbery.

Only the elder Loenthal was to be seen, for, as he explained, his brother was entirely prostrated by the heavy loss.

"In dot safe he had all his monish, more ash ten t'ousand dollars, und he feels dot he is ruined."

Then a visit was paid to the bank, where due inquiries were made, and afterward, at Phenix's suggestion, a call was made upon the younger Loenthal, who, they discovered, occupied a furnished room with his brother on one of the side streets up-town.

When they came to the house Joe Phenix felt a fierce thrill of joy.

The house was in the same block as the one that Madame Mendoza had occupied.

One by one the man hunter was gathering the threads together.

They found Loenthal getting ready to depart. He explained that he was going to take a run to Philadelphia and Baltimore, where he had business friends from whom he expected to raise money, but in regard to the robbery he was unable to tell anything beyond the fact that he was about ruined by his loss.

"A most mysterious affair," the chief said, when they got into the street again. "No clew at all."

"Well, we must try and find one," Phenix remarked, quietly, as he parted from the others.

There was something in the tone which impressed the chief, and turning to his companion, he cried:

"I'll bet you a hundred dollars to a cent that Joe has struck something, though may I be hanged if I can see anything that a man can work on."

But the superintendent, though an able officer, was not Joe Phenix, who was a natural-born man-hunter.

That night, in his disguise of the German valet, Phenix retired to rest as usual.

Midnight came.

Pine Tree Hall was buried in slumber.

All had retired to rest.

But what are these three dark forms stealing along the entry toward the doors—side by side—which led into the apartments of Kate Scott and Joe Phenix?

Is there mischief afoot?

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

A SURPRISE.

THE moonbeams shining in at the windows gave light to the entry, so that the darkness which pervaded it was partly dispelled.

The three dark forms stealing along the entry were those of Nailmaker, Old Monkey, and the youth, Louis Franco.

Thanks to the moonlight, they were enabled to see what they were about without being obliged to have recourse to artificial illumination.

"Are the doors all fixed?" Old Monkey asked.

"Oh, yes, I attended to that this evening while our birds were at supper," Nailmaker answered.

"The screws of the catches are all drawn and replaced with a smaller size imbedded in putty, so they look perfectly firm and will stand a smart tug, but when it comes to a steady push, with considerable force, they will draw out as though they had been cut off, so we can get into the rooms without making any noise."

"That is good!" the youth remarked.

"We cannot be too careful when such a man as this bloodhound is concerned. If we gave him the chance he would fight like a veritable demon."

"Yes, but we will not give him any chance," Old Monkey remarked.

"That isn't the way we do business."

"I waited as late as I could before I tampered with the screws, so as to give as little chance for discovery as possible," Nailmaker remarked.

"Oh, I don't think there is much danger of their discovering that the doors have been tampered with," the youth observed.

"In the first place, we have one great advantage: neither of the spies has any idea that their presence in the house is suspected, and therefore they will not be on their guard against danger."

"They flatter themselves that they are doing all the watching, and never suspect that the closest kind of a scrutiny is constantly kept upon them."

"Yes, and that is where we certainly have the best of them," Nailmaker remarked.

"Now, let us arrange the programme. Here's the vial of chloroform and a sponge for me, and another one for you, Old Monkey. I will take the girl, and you two attend to the man."

"He is a powerful fellow, and you must be

careful how you go to work or else you may have trouble, for if you give him a chance to struggle you will have a hard time with him.

"Now, my idea is for you, Franco, to administer the chloroform, while Old Monkey holds him down, because it will take a few moments for the fluid to get in its work."

"With the girl I sha'n't have any trouble, for I shall quietly choke her until the chloroform takes hold."

"How about the coal-oil?" Old Monkey asked.

"There's a couple of gallon cans in this closet," Nailmaker replied, unlocking a closet which was in the entry as he spoke, and producing the oil cans.

"After the chloroform has rendered them insensible, saturate their clothes with the oil and then set them on fire, taking care to close the door immediately so as to confine the flames to the rooms; and be sure to carry the oil cans off, for if they were found it would lead to the suspicion there had been foul play."

"Oh, we will be careful about that, of course," Old Monkey remarked.

"There will not be much danger of any one detecting that there is anything wrong about the matter," he continued, "for when the fires once get started they will soon make short work of the spies."

"Are all preparations made so that we can extinguish the fires when they have done their work?" the youth asked.

"Yes, the hose is all ready, and I will be on hand just as soon as I think the spies are done for," Nailmaker replied.

Pine Tree Hall, thanks to a windmill and an enormous supply-tank, had a fine supply of water, and as the late owner had a dread of fire, two full-sized hose with pipes were always kept in readiness.

The gang intended to use fire to destroy the spies, whom they feared, but they had no idea of burning down the house in the attempt.

"To work then, for there is no time to be lost," the youth declared.

Old Monkey and Franco advanced to the door of the room occupied by Joe Phenix, while Nailmaker moved toward the door of Kate Scott's room.

They turned the door-knobs, and then quietly put their shoulders against the doors and pushed.

The doors were both locked and bolted on the inside, but, under the steady push, the fastening of the bolt and lock-catches gave way, the screws having been tampered with as the ruffian explained, and the doors opened.

The two spies were at the mercy of the outlaws, if, during the chloroforming process, something did not go wrong.

Old Monkey and the youth approached the bed whereon Joe Phenix was extended.

Before lying down the detective had partially closed in the blinds of his window, so that the room was quite dark.

Kate Scott had also acted in a similar manner, and this fact would have been sure to have excited suspicion in the minds of the members of the gang if all of them had been aware of the exact facts.

But as it was, Nailmaker knew that the blind in Kate's room was closed, but knew nothing about Joe Phenix's apartment, and the others knew about Phenix's blind, but not about the other.

"Now!" exclaimed the youth to his companions as they stood by Joe Phenix's bedside.

Old Monkey threw himself upon the detective, who was lying on his back in just the position to invite an attack.

Old Monkey chuckled grimly to himself as he thought of what a surprise the attack would be, but the chuckle turned into a gasp of rage when, as he sprung upon the supposed sleeper, he found the detective prepared for the assault.

Joe Phenix had been playing possum.

He was fully dressed, and had only drawn a light quilt over him, and the moment that Old Monkey sprung upon him, he seized the ruffian in his strong arms and, rising to a sitting posture, threw him off.

The ruffian was thrown from the bed with terrific violence and being hurled against the youth, knocked him against the wall with such force that the shock stunned him, and he went down to the floor like a log.

Old Monkey, as soon as he could recover himself, attempted to draw a weapon, but Joe Phenix was ready for him. With a short club which the detective drew from his pocket he gave the ruffian a blow on the head which felled him as the ox falls beneath the blow of the killer.

The moment the man was down the detective sprung a pair of handcuffs upon him, and then, first ascertaining that the other one of the intruders was stunned and not likely to recover for a few moments, proceeded to see if Kate Scott needed any assistance.

Being constantly on the watch for an attack, it was no wonder that the pair of spies discovered that their doors had been tampered with the moment the trick was done, and so, anticipating from this circumstance that an assault would be

made upon that night, they were in readiness to meet it.

Kate Scott did not need any assistance though.

Being prepared for the attack, and armed with a small "loaded" billy—that is, a club with lead in one end of it, similar to the one carried by Joe Phenix—the moment that Nailmaker bent over her she hit him a rap on the head that knocked him backward, half-stunned.

Quick to follow up the advantage, she sprung to her feet, and with another well-directed blow stretched him out upon the floor.

Like Joe Phenix she had lain down with all her clothes on.

Then she was quick to snap a pair of handcuffs on his wrists and deprive him of his weapons.

"Got your man safe, Kate?" Joe Phenix asked.

"All safe, sir."

"I've got two, and one of them, who seems to be scarcely more than a boy, I don't exactly know what to make of, and so I will bring my man in here for you to take care of while I examine the youth."

"Light the glim and keep your revolver out. These are desperate fellows, and if they show signs of being ugly, don't hesitate to drive a bullet through them."

"Yes, sir."

While Kate lit her lamp, Joe Phenix carried Old Monkey into the room and propped him up in a corner, and then by his side he placed the other.

Kate took a chair and sat down by the door, her revolver in her hand ready for action.

Perfectly satisfied that, desperate as the ruffians were, they could not escape while Kate guarded them, Joe Phenix returned to his own room, lit his lamp and proceeded to examine the youth who was now beginning to recover consciousness.

The force of the shock which had prostrated him had thrown off the soft slouch hat which he wore pulled down over his forehead.

With the hat had gone the black, curly-haired wig which had been worn as a disguise, and the face of the housekeeper, Miss Du Burg stood revealed.

Joe Phenix was surprised, for he had not expected this disclosure, although he had suspected from the beginning that she was one of the chief actors in the conspiracy.

"She is a desperate little woman," the detective muttered, "and I had better see if she isn't prepared to bite as well as bark."

As he suspected, she was armed with a small revolver and a little dagger, both of which Joe Phenix took.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

THE TRUTH AT LAST.

THE disguised woman had fallen in a sitting position, with her head resting against the wall.

Joe Phenix sat only a few paces away, while between the two was the table—but it was by the wall—upon which the lamp sat, and Joe Phenix had arranged the light so that its rays shone full on the face of the woman.

Slowly her senses returned.

She opened her eyes and looked around her—bewildered for a moment, and then, as she recovered the full use of her powers, she realized what had happened.

She cast an earnest glance at the detective, as much as to put the question:

"How much do you know?"

Joe Phenix understood the question as though she had put it in words.

"Be satisfied that there isn't any escape for you. I know all," he remarked.

The woman rose slowly to her feet and thrust her hand into her pocket where the revolver had been kept.

Joe Phenix shook his head.

"Oh, no, don't try anything of that sort," he said.

"It will not do you any good; besides, I have deprived you of your weapons."

The woman sank into a chair and glared at the detective in rage.

"Come, come, take it easy," he said. "I don't like to fight a woman, and I would make matters as light for you as I can, although I have an idea that you have been one of the chief movers in this conspiracy."

"Conspiracy!" and the woman laughed contemptuously.

She was game clear through.

"Yes, I told you that I had got the whole of you dead to rights. You don't suppose a Jew like Loenthal isn't going to weaken when he gets in a tight place?"

"I don't know any such man."

"Oh, yes, you do, and the snap has been given away. See if I can't tell you the story."

"Campbell Auchinclose was poisoned and the will he made was stolen and destroyed, so that the property would come to this girl, Virginia, who it was designed should be married by one of your gang."

"It was a deep-laid plot; she was a young and romantic girl, and the fellow first came to her

notice by saving her from a couple of tramps the night she returned home.

"Of course it was all a farce; the coachman had been decoyed away and one of the gang was on the box; the tramps were two more of the gang."

"Then the fellow's next appearance was as a foreign marquis, and from what I can see, I think the plot would have succeeded, and the girl, with her immense wealth, would have fallen into the hands of you conspirators if I had not been called into the case."

"Then, too, since the appearance of Mr. Campbell at Pine Tree Hall the marquis has not had such smooth sailing."

"His nobility was doubted, and in order to settle all doubts a raise had to be made, so a large sum of money could be produced to silence all doubters."

"The robbery of the Wall street bank was planned and successfully carried out, thanks to the fact that the Loenthal office was next door to it."

"This marquis is a fellow of genius—he may be called the Man of Three, for successfully has he played a threefold role."

"First, as the Marquis of Morel, a distinguished European gentleman who has come to this country and taken such a fancy to it that he thinks he will make it his home for life."

"Second, as the brother of the Jew broker, Loenthal, the man who found the capital, appeared to be the moving spirit of the firm, and yet was satisfied to keep himself discreetly in the background."

"Third, as the captain of a gang of desperadoes and daring a' gang of scoundrels as ever were leagued together for purposes of plunder."

"And from the fact that you were all strangers to this land, and worked your game in a different manner from our native rascals, it was a difficult matter to hunt you down; but it is not in nature that such a gang should prosper, and, as the French say, 'Everything comes to him that waits.'

"I waited, and at last succeeded. You are my prisoner, captured in disguise while attempting my life. Your two confederates are in the other room, wearing the bracelets and safely guarded."

"Loenthal is in the hands of the police, and a detachment is ready for me outside, in ambush, to make a raid, not only on the De Jones place, where the chief of the gang has found cover, but also on the old shanty down by the water-side, where the marquis's valet has been playing fisherman for a while; and, by the way, that's the man who came in with you, and whom I have ornamented with the 'darbies.'"

This was the truth. It was Old Monkey who had acted as the valet of the marquis.

"Now, either in the De Jones place or down in the old house I expect to find the plunder taken from the bank."

The detective had watched the face of the woman closely while he spoke, expecting to be able to distinguish whether he had hit upon the truth in his guesses, but the expression upon her features never changed.

But when he ended, she drew a long breath, and folded her hands in her lap in a weary sort of fashion.

She did not have the least doubt now that the Jew broker had "peached," turned State's evidence to save himself, for, otherwise, the detective would not be in possession of the facts he had mentioned.

She had no suspicion that the able detective, like the scoundrel who from a single bone builds up the skeleton of the entire animal, was able from a few scattered chapters to guess at the complete tale.

"It is useless to attempt to deny the truth; I see you are in possession of all the facts," she said.

"I am in the trap, but as I walked into it myself I suppose there isn't any use for me to complain."

"I played a strong game for a great stake, and, having lost, have no right to repine; but it is hard after so many years of an honest life that I should be led into temptation and lost."

There was a world of pathos in the woman's voice, and even inflexible Joe Phenix was touched.

"Tell me your story, and I will do what I can for you," he said.

"I will," and the housekeeper gained courage from his manner, "and I will tell you nothing but the truth, too, believe me!"

"I am a Frenchwoman, and the daughter of one of the most accomplished adventurers that ever lived."

"From my earliest years I was acquainted with the ups and downs of a criminal's life."

"When I was eighteen both my parents died, and with some friends, who did not know of the vile race from which I sprung, I came to this country."

"I had received a good education—could speak three languages fluently, and was accomplished."

"I was thrown in Mr. Audinot's way, and he is his housekeeper. In time he professed to love me and I believed him; he remained to carry me."

"At last I grew impatient, and then he sought to satisfy me by saying he would remember me in his will; I should have a fortune when he died, but he lied to me, for when the will was drawn out I was not even mentioned in it, for, by stealth, I got possession of it one day and satisfied my curiosity."

"In this wild hour, when I was mad with revenge, the tempter came, Captain Rats, as his pals term him, Pierre Sabat is his right name."

"He was an old friend of my father; I confided my wrongs to him, and he hatched this plot."

"But the old man was not poisoned. He was so drunk that night that he knew not what he was doing and so took an overdose, but I let him take it, and then stole and burnt the will. I continued the clairvoyant business and have been mad ever since I entered into the plot."

Phenix believed that the woman spoke the truth.

"Where is this bank plunder?"

"Concealed in the ice-house on the De Jones place."

"Suppose I hold my tongue and allow you to go free?"

"I will lead an honest life, and try by deeds of charity and mercy to atone for the past!" exclaimed the woman, throwing herself at Phenix's feet.

"Be it so; depart as soon as you can arrange your affairs."

"Perhaps it is weakness, but I cannot bring this woman to judgment," he murmured.

CHAPTER XL.

A WEEK-KNEED BROTHER.

THE Marquis of Morel sat in his library which was one of the cosiest rooms in the De Jones mansion.

It was situated on the ground floor in the rear of the house and from its windows a magnificent view could be had of the broad expanse of water which marks the junction of Long Island Sound and the strait which connects the sound with the sea, and bears the name of the East River.

It is night though at the time we introduce the reader to the "sanctum santorum" of the man in regard to whom so much suspicion was afloat, and all the curtains of the room were tightly drawn.

The apartment was called the library and indeed boasted a goodly array of books, elaborately bound, but the marquis was not a man who cared much for literature, and he used the room more for a smoking and lounging apartment.

In a convenient closet was a choice assortment of cigars and liquors of all kinds, and when any of the gentlemen of the neighborhood paid him a visit they were entertained in a royal manner, and it was the universal opinion of the men thus honored that the marquis had as good an assortment of "weeds" and drinkables as could be found north of Harlem River.

It was about ten o'clock at night at the time we introduce the reader to the favorite resort of the gentleman who has played so important a part in our story.

The marquis sat in a comfortable easy-chair, by the side of the capricious center-table, upon which were the evening journals.

Within easy reach of the Marquis's hand was a bottle of choice Burgundy wine and from the fact that fully half of the contents were gone it was plain that the gentleman had not neglected it.

New York is a city of sensations, and the newspapers, like a pack of hounds in chase of a fox, always are in "full cry" after the latest excitement, and so it happened that all the evening journals gave a large amount of space to the "great bank robbery."

The marquis in looking over the newspaper had paid particular attention to these articles, and when he had carefully read all of them he lay back in his chair and indulged in a hearty laugh.

"It is the same old story!" he exclaimed. "The exact statement that the detectives always make, no matter what kind of a case they are engaged upon. They are working up certain clews and there isn't any doubt that in a very short time the rascals will be nabbed."

"The old, old story, put forth to gull the public and to scare the men who did the job, just as if cracksmen who are smart enough to put through a first-class job like this one, would be so ignorant as to be frightened by empty words."

Just at this point there was a couple of cautious knocks upon the door which led into a closet at one corner of the room.

This particular closet was a mystery to the servants of the mansion for it was secured by a lock of peculiar construction which could not be opened by any ordinary key, and the servants were always careful not to leave the door open.

The marquis accounted for the case by taking to pieces of any pay-off ever from examining the closet by saying that he kept important legal documents relating to his business affairs in the closet, papers of considerable value being

body but himself, but the loss of any of them would cause him considerable trouble.

In this ingenious way Morel accounted for the care he took to keep the closet securely locked, and at the same time spread abroad the belief that his interests abroad must be of a particularly extensive character.

"Who can that be?" the marquis queried, as he proceeded to unlock the closet door.

The door opened outward, and as it swung on its hinges a flood of light was poured into it, and the interior, instead of being fitted with shelves and boxes for the safe-keeping of valuable documents, was perfectly bare, and a narrow stairway led to the cellar below.

This was one of the improvements that the Marquis of Morel had made after taking possession of the De Jones place.

The cellar under the library was separated from the main cellar, and from it a door led to the open air at the rear of the mansion, and as this door was never locked it was an easy matter to gain admission to the secret stairway, which was concealed from view in the cellar by a closet similar to the one by means of which access was gained to it from the library.

Within the closet stood the Hebrew broker, Moses Loenthal.

"Oho, it is you, eh?" the marquis exclaimed.

"Yesh, yesh," the Jew responded, advancing into the room.

The marquis closed the door of the closet, which was fastened with a spring lock.

"Sit down and make yourself comfortable," said the host, waving his visitor to a chair.

The Jew complied, and sunk into the embrace of the easy-chair in a way which, to the experienced eyes of the marquis, seemed to indicate he did not feel well.

The marquis resumed his seat, took a good look at the Jew's moody face, and then a contemptuous smile played around his expressive mouth.

"Moses, my boy, what weight of care affects your mind at present?"

"Mine gootness! can you ask?" exclaimed the banker, with a groan.

"Oh, yes, I can ask, of course, and, judging from your face, you are feeling particularly uncomfortable just now."

"I am suffering the torments of the damned," blurted out the other.

"Well, that is putting it pretty strongly, to say the least, and may I ask what affects my ancient friend?"

"Oh, you know well enough! Is not der State Prison looming up before us?"

"Well, you may be able to see that unpleasant prospect, but I cannot say that my vision is keen enough to perceive any such thing."

"Ah, it may be a fine thing to joke about, but I do not see it. Mine gootness! I am all of a shiver!"

"Your apprehension is absurd!" the marquis remarked.

"There is not the least occasion for it. What have we to fear?"

"Everything!" cried the Jew.

"Have you not read the newspapers?" he continued, with a glance at the journals which littered the table.

"Oh, yes, I have looked over them."

"Can you not see that the police are moving heaven and earth to get at the men who did this bank trick?"

"Don't you suppose I know that without having to depend for the knowledge upon these scoundrels?"

"And did you not read that the detectives had secured important clews?"

"Yes, yes, of course!" and the speaker smiled in the most sarcastic manner.

"And all der newspapers state that there isn't any doubt the men who robbed the bank will soon be arrested."

"Certainly; but, my dear Moses, is it possible that so old a bird as you can be deceived by that shallow trick? Don't you know that the newspapers always make that statement in regard to every crime that happens? The detectives are always hot on the scent if you are willing to take their word for it—and they always profess to be certain to snatch the criminals bald-headed, to use the expressive Americanism—but, sometimes, they are not able to make performance come up to promise."

"Oh, it is not the common detectives that I fear!" the Jew exclaimed, with a wise shake of the head.

"I know as well as you that they talk much with their mouths, and always say they are certain to catch the rascals, even when they know nothing at all about them; but there is a man on the scent this time who is a perfect bloodhound and when he takes a case he seldom fails to run down his man."

"I think I can guess who you mean—this fellow who calls himself Joe Phenix."

"Yesh, yesh, dot is der man."

"He has been employed?"

"Yesh, and if we beat him the game must be a strong one."

"We must play our cards extra well, eh?"

"Yesh, yesh, no doubt about it."

The marquis consulted his watch.

"Twenty-five minutes to twelve," he remarked.

ed. "Well, old boy, you can tranquilize your soul, for Joe Phenix, bloodhound though he may be, will not be likely to trouble anybody hereafter, for by this time he is knocking at St. Peter's portal, soliciting admission to that paradise where all good detectives are supposed to go."

"Mine goodness! you take my breath away!" the broker exclaimed.

"Do you mean to say that the man is dead?"

"Yes, that is the English of it. He laid a trap for me and I reciprocated by fixing one for him."

"Old Monkey and Nailmaker have charge of the matter, and you know that both of them are men who can be relied upon to do any work of the kind to perfection."

"Ah, mine fr'ien', you take a great weight off my mind," the Jew observed with a sigh of relief.

"If I could only be sure that this demon of a Phenix was put out of the way I should not feel at all alarmed, for the rest of the detectives are blockheads compared to him."

"Bah, you are making a mountain out of a mole-hill!" the marquis exclaimed in contempt.

"Phenix is no better than the rest; he may have had the good luck to be a little more successful and that is all there is to it. There's nothing succeeds like success, you know."

"The fellow has been fortunate, and straight-way people make a hero of him."

"Oh, yesh, but he is far smarter than the common detectives; he has made some wonderful captures in his time, and when I found that he was on our track it made the cold shivers run all over me."

"Well, his goose is cooked, so you need not worry any more."

"Yesh, yesh, I hope so," the other remarked, and it was plainly to be seen that his mind was not yet at ease.

"I was never in so great a game as this before, and if I was only sure that it is as you say I would feel better, but I shall not be satisfied until I look upon the dead face of Joe Phenix!"

CHAPTER XLI. BROUGHT TO BOOK.

THE door opened abruptly and into the room came the bloodhound, Joseph Phenix in person, followed by a couple of stalwart, determined-looking men.

"Excuse my intrusion, but as I heard my name mentioned I thought I would take the liberty of entering without going through the formality of knocking," the detective remarked.

The marquis and the Jew broker were equally surprised, but vastly different was the way it affected them.

The Jew's under-jaw dropped and he sunk back in his chair with an expression on his face which clearly indicated that he wished the earth would open and swallow him.

On the face of the master of the mansion not the least expression of fear appeared, however; he started at the unexpected entrance of the intruders and a dark, fierce look appeared in his face; for a moment only was this visible and then it changed to an expression of surprise, and he glanced at the new-comers in a haughty way.

"Really you have a strange manner of coming into a gentleman's private apartment!" he exclaimed.

"May I ask to what I am indebted for the honor of this visit?" he continued in a decidedly sarcastic manner.

"Certainly," Joe Phenix replied. "I am a detective officer, as are also these two gentlemen," and he nodded to his companions.

"I have a warrant for the arrest of one Pierce Sabat, alias Captain Ratz, alias Abraham Loenthal, alias the Marquis of Morel."

The Jew broker fairly collapsed at this intelligence, but his companion put on a bold, front and burst into a scornful laugh.

"What is the meaning of this string of nonsense?" he exclaimed.

"I am the Marquis of Morel, and you are surely not crazy enough to dare to charge me with any crime!"

"That I have a warrant for your arrest is a sufficient answer to that question I should think," Joe Phenix replied.

"What ridiculous charge is brought against me?"

"A pretty serious one," the detective answered. "You are wanted for this great bank robbery."

"Absurd! who dares to make such an accusation against me?" cried the marquis, his voice and face full of indignation, while the Jew broker shrunk still further into the embrace of the easy-chair, as if he hoped to escape observation.

"Oh, it will not serve you in the least to try the virtuous indignation game," the detective remarked.

"In this case we have got you dead to rights and there's no two ways about it."

"You have played your cards remarkably well—in fact I am willing to admit that you did the trick as nicely as any such job was ever worked, as far as my knowledge goes, and if you had displayed as much energy in a good

cause there is no doubt success would have crowned your efforts, but it is not designed by a wise Providence that—all things being equal—rascality shall prosper as well as honesty."

"The very stars in their courses fought against you, and, in spite of the skill with which you planned and the wonderful manner in which you carried out the scheme, circumstances have defeated you."

"Did I understand you to say you were a detective?" the marquis inquired.

"Such is my profession."

"You have mistaken your vocation—you should have been a preacher," the other sneered.

"The masterly manner in which you illustrate that virtue prospers and vice does not show that you have decided talent in that line."

"Do you really think so?" Phenix asked in the most innocent manner possible, just as if he thought the other was in earnest.

"Oh, yes, not a doubt of it."

"Well, I am glad to be assured of the fact by a man as well calculated to judge as yourself, for the vast experience which you must have had to attain to your present eminence in crime renders you a most excellent critic."

"But to return to our mutton, for we have other business a little more important than to waste time in discussing a question of this kind."

"I shall have to trouble you to accompany me, and as you are fairly in the toils I would advise you to make a clean breast of it. Put us on the track so we can get at the plunder which you stole from the bank and the authorities will undoubtedly give you a lighter sentence."

"Bah! this is sheer nonsense!" the marquis cried, in the most defiant manner.

"You have not the least bit of proof, and are only trying a big game of brag after your American fashion."

"A greater mistake you never made in all your life!" Joe Phenix declared.

"I tell you the 'gaft is blown,' and you are booked for Sing Sing as sure as you are a living man!"

"Nearly all your confederates are in the hands of the police. Nailmaker, Old Monkey, and the boy who calls himself Louis Franco, but who, in reality is the housekeeper of Pine Tree Hall, Miss Du Burg."

"The three tried to murder me to-night, and at the same time send on a trip to the other world my best female decoy; that attempt brought about your ruin, for I was on my guard against just such a thing, and, being prepared for the attack, was able, not only to defeat it, but to capture all the parties concerned in the affair, and you ought to know your pals well enough to understand that when they found themselves in a tight place they did not hesitate to betray you in order to make their own sentences light."

The heart of the acute plotter was filled with a deadly rage, for there was something in the manner of the bloodhound which convinced him that an important part of his speech was truth.

He did not believe that either Old Monkey or Nailmaker would "peach," for he knew from long experience that both were true as steel; but the woman whom his smiles had seduced into joining him in his dark and dangerous schemes would n't be apt to keep silence if she found herself in the hands of the police.

That the detective did not know as much as he pretended he felt sure, but from the fact that the bloodhound was so hot on his trail he was satisfied Phenix had a good case against him.

One thing only remained for him to do.

He had been hunted down; cunning would no longer avail him; no chance for him to play the fox, but the lion's boldness might serve his turn.

"Oh, well, since you appear to be so certain in regard to this matter, I suppose I shall have to go with you; but when you come to an examination, you will find that you have made a most ridiculous mistake."

And as he finished the speech, he half-turned away as though in disdain.

But as he did so he thrust his hand into his breast, for the movement was made to mask the drawing of a weapon.

Phenix, though, had dealt with many a desperate man in his time, and understood that a first-class rascal of this kind, when driven into a corner, would be apt to fight as desperately as a tiger brought to bay, notwithstanding the odds were so heavy against him, so he was prompt to act.

The moment the marquis turned his face away the detective signaled to his companions, and immediately the men precipitated themselves upon the accused, so the marquis was in the grasp of the satellites of the law before he could get his weapon out.

He essayed to make a desperate struggle, but the others were too much for him, and snapped the handcuffs on his wrists in the most adroit manner, forcing him to the floor in the struggle, and the moment he was secured they "went through him" in a scientific way, despite his struggles, curses and threats.

The Old World criminal, with all his caution,

had not anticipated being brought to book in this unexpected fashion, and so upon his person was found evidence that proved beyond a doubt that he had had a hand in the great bank robbery.

"Aha!" exclaimed Joe Phenix, as he beheld the result of the search, "if we hadn't you dead to rights before, we have now, and, cunning as you are, the chances are about a million to one that you will go up the river this time!"

"I will have your life for this some time, you accursed bloodhound!" cried the scoundrel, in a voice hoarse with passion.

"Oh, that is an old threat; you are not the first man by a dozen who has made it; but there's an old saying that 'threatened men live long,' and I guess there must be a good deal of truth in it, for I am still in the land of the living, yet twenty times have desperate men sworn that they would kill me the moment they got free from the prison walls to which I was instrumental in sending them."

"You may be more fortunate than the rest in keeping your vow, but I doubt it."

"Now to business again. What have you done with the bank plunder?"

"You will not learn anything from me," the other replied, sullenly.

"Loenthal, my tulip, you are in a tight place, too," the detective said, turning to the Jew, "for you are wanted also."

"You see the result of getting into bad company."

"Oh, mine goodness! do what you can for me!" cried the Jew, going down upon his knees in the most abject way.

"All right, I will, provided that you do what you can for us."

"I will! I will!"

"Put us on the track of the plunder."

"I cannot—I do not really know; he attended to that," and the broker pointed to the manacled felon, who by this time had risen to his feet.

"But you can give a shrewd guess, eh?"

"Oh, yesh; I guess the hoolie is not far off, for no detective would think of looking for the stuff in such a house as this."

"You white-livered coward!" cried the marquis, in a rage.

"Oho! we are not on the scent, then!" cried Phenix, convinced by the anger of his prisoner that the Jew's guess had hit the truth.

Then, by the aid of the keys which they had taken from their captive's pocket, the bloodhounds began their search, and within ten minutes had the satisfaction of discovering the stolen property.

"Upon my word, we have worked this trick to the queen's taste!" Joe Phenix remarked, complacently.

An hour later the Jew broker and the "Marquis of Morel" had joined the rest of the band in that gloomy pile, the Tombs, the New York City prison.

But when the gang came to be tried, the only charge made against them was for the robbery of the bank; as Judge Colamore observed, when acquainted with all the facts in the case—

"As long as the conspiracy has failed, and it is impossible to prove whether Mr. Auchinclose was murdered or not, it would be utter folly to bring Virginia into court."

Heavy sentences the rascals got, for the judge showed no mercy.

All fashionable New York was amazed when it was discovered that the dashing Marquis of Morel was a common robber; still, the same people will be as eager to run after the next "nobleman" who makes his appearance.

At last, Virginia discovered she loved James Campbell, and the engagement is announced; 'tis said, too, that pretty Miss Birdseye has caught the fancy of the rich Barry Livingstone, and that there is likely to be a double wedding celebrated at Pine Tree Hall, and when the marriage bells ring out merrily, few there will be apt to remember that there ever existed such an arch-scoundrel as The Man of Three.

THE END.

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